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# THE ILLUSTRATED MESSENGER

GLAD TIDINGS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

1419.e 1629.
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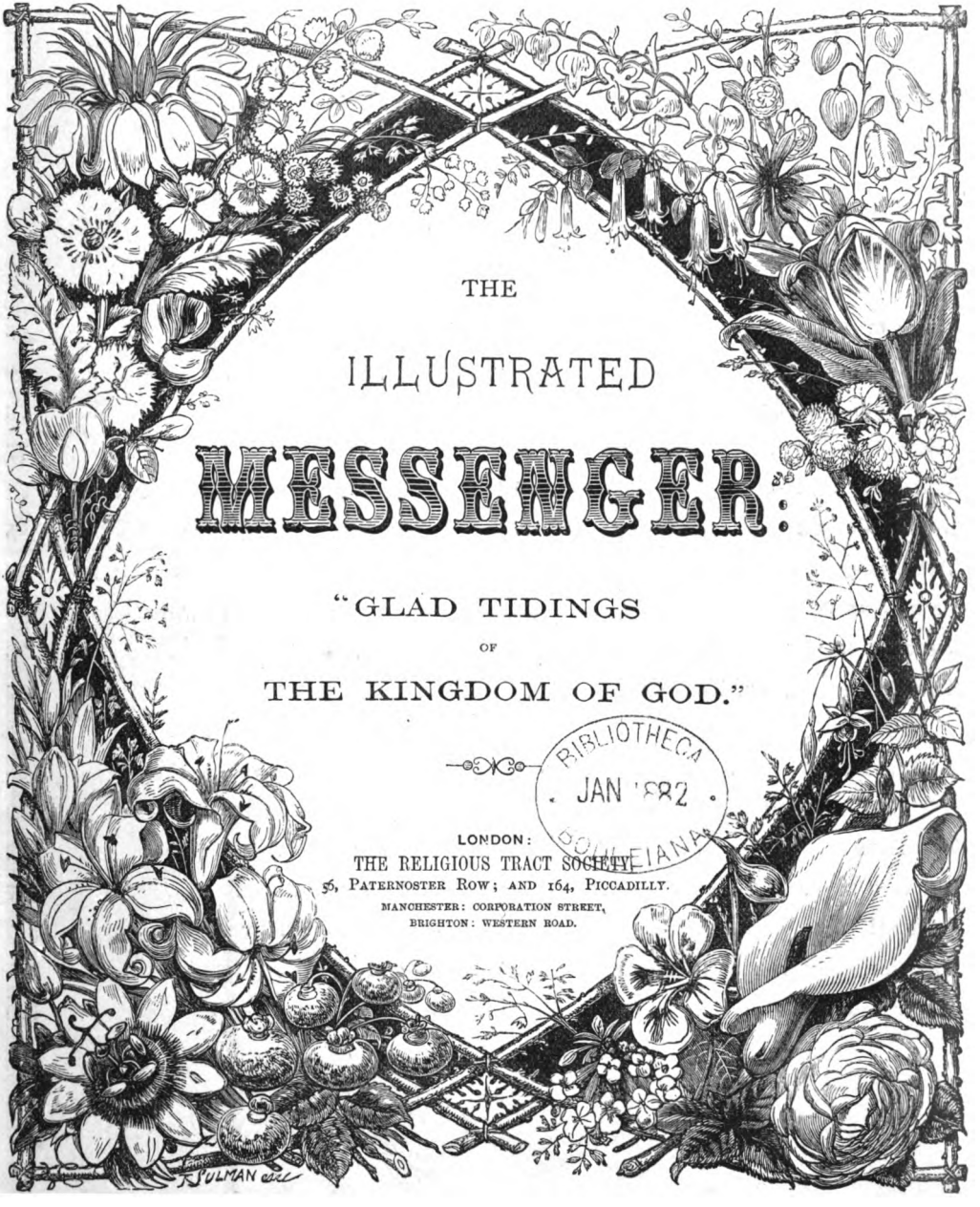
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"THE LORD GOD OF THE HEBREWS HATH SENT ME UNTO THEE."
*Exodus* vii.

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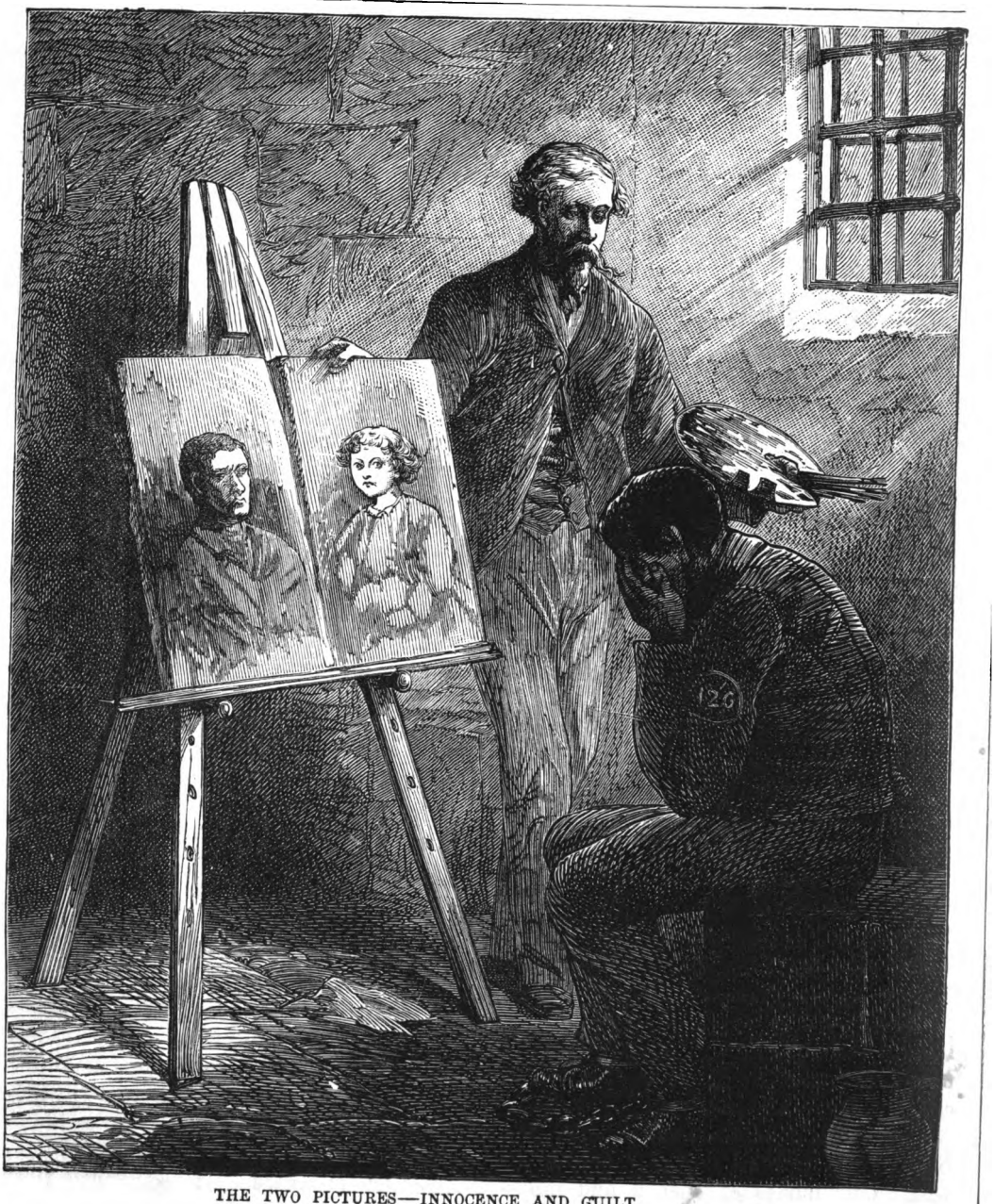


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# CORDS OF SIN.



THE TWO PICTURES—INNOCENCE AND GUILT.

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# Cords of Sin.



Most persons know how cords and ropes are made. The ropemaker takes a few threads of hemp, any one of which a child might break with ease, and twists them into a string. Even that string, with a little effort, might be easily broken. But he takes a number of such strings, and twists them into ropes, or into a cable, by which the largest vessel may be securely held, and which a hundred men could not break.

The formation of such a cord or rope well illustrates the formation of habit—of all habit, but especially of evil habit. It would be a misuse of the word to say that a man was born with a habit of any kind. Habits are formed—formed by a succession of acts, each of which might be compared to a thread, so fine as to be almost imperceptible, but whose combined force is, in many cases, all but resistless.

Character has been well said to be "a bundle of habits;" so that we are all of us characterised by habits of one kind or another, some of them indifferent, some, perhaps, good, and some which we cannot but admit, with all our self-love, to be bad. Our modes of speech and movement, the artist's command over his chisel or his pencil, the facility and power of an accomplished speaker, and many other things, which will suggest themselves at once to everybody who thinks on the subject, are all, more or less, matters of habit, formed, so to speak, thread by thread. In nothing, however, is this gradual formation of habit more obvious than in regard to what is bad.

We could not find a better example than that vice which is yearly dragging so many thousands to perdition—the vice of drunkenness. Does any man ever become a drunkard all at once? Who has ever met with any one who, at the beginning of his career, set it before him, as a thing to aim at, to be a drunkard; or who even thought of such a consummation as likely in regard to himself? The young man generally begins by taking a little, not always because he cares about it, but because the company he has chosen take it. The taste is soon formed; there is a craving for the return of the excitement; but it requires more and more to produce it. The vice is stealing on. By-and-by there comes an occasional act of positive intoxication. Still he is not yet an habitual drunkard. But his insobriety becomes more frequent. Ere long he can scarcely pass even a small portion of a day without the accustomed stimulus. It soon becomes

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evident, even to the world, that he is the slave of drink, and at last the conviction forces itself on his own mind that he is degraded and lost. Oh! the multitudes who, ere they were aware, have been thus enslaved and precipitated into the lowest depths of misery and shame!

This particular vice specified is only one of many which might be enumerated, in all of which might be traced the gradual formation of evil habit. Let no one delude himself with the idea that he will commit a sin but once, or, at most, only now and then. He may think, by so doing, to quell the importunity of passion, and may delude himself with the persuasion that then it will beset him no more; but no mistake can be greater. The craving will become stronger, and the power of resistance will be lessened by every indulgence. He is twisting for himself a cord, and weaving around himself the meshes of a net, in which he may be dragged down, first to present degradation and misery, and then to the abyss of everlasting ruin. As Solomon strikingly says: "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins."[1]

We see the power of sinful habit in the manner in which it keeps the sinner back from his own purposes of amendment. He feels that he is undermining his constitution, ruining his family, losing his character, destroying his soul; and he resolves to fling off the yoke, and to be free. For a short time, perhaps, his resolution stands, and he is free; but, ere long, some temptation presents itself—not improbably a very slight one—and he becomes worse than ever. Sir Richard Steele wrote the "Christian Hero," that he might stand pledged before the world to sobriety; but the cord proved powerless as a thread of gossamer. Few things are more pitiable than the long, ineffective struggles of Coleridge—struggles in his own poor strength—with the vice of opium-eating. Unnumbered multitudes have looked back to the paths of peace from which they had wandered; but the power of evil habit, as with a strong, though unseen cord, kept them back, and they continued the slaves of their sins.

[1] Prov. v. 22.

The cords of sin drag men down to deeper guilt. The tendency of sin is ever downward. The conscience becomes seared; the range of transgression becomes more and more extended; and it is found necessary, for the very purpose of drowning the voice of conscience, to rush down to lower depths of dissipation and vice.

And these cords of sin drag the sinner down to present misery and everlasting ruin. When fiction would portray the lowest depths of human wretchedness, where does she find her most striking instances? Not in the good—crushed, persecuted, enchained in the dark and noisome dungeon; but in the bad—found out by their sins, condemned, disgraced, and tortured by remorse. And every one who reads such delineations feels that they are true—true to Scripture, and true to life. Yet all that men endure now in this manner is but the beginning of sorrows, which nothing will alleviate, and which will be everlasting.

A story is told of a painter who painted a picture of innocence. He found a beautiful child, with open countenance, and beaming eyes, and flowing golden

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locks; and he transferred the portrait to his canvas as the very emblem of innocence. Years after he wished to have, for the sake of contrast, a picture of guilt. He proceeded to a prison, and obtained permission to paint the portrait of a hardened criminal, who had been committed for some heinous crime, and on whose countenance the wildest passions had written indelible and hideous lines. When the picture was finished, it was placed side by side with the former one in the prisoner's cell. As soon as the man's eyes fell on the contrasted pictures, he burst into tears. The picture of innocence was his own, as well as the picture of guilt; the one was what he had been, the other what he was. Let no one say that it is impossible that he should ever become the slave of evil habit. The most winning childhood, and the most ingenuous youth, may issue in a maturity of awful wickedness. There is a germ of evil in every heart, which needs but appropriate circumstances and unbridled indulgence, to expand into any or every crime.

It is of the utmost importance, then, that we should guard against the formation of evil habit; and yet, in impressing that thought on those who, though free from the dominion of such habit, have not yet given their heart to God, we should not so much say, Do not be intemperate; do not be profligate; do not be dishonest; do not be a blasphemer; as, summing up all in one direction, Give your heart to God; that is, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; seek, through Him, forgiveness, and, through Him, the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit. Then take His Word for your guide, and say, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." If, aided by God's Holy Spirit, you sincerely seek and trust Him, you will find that temptations, which you may have sometimes felt to be exceedingly powerful, will exert upon you less and less force. Habits of obedience, purity, and love will be formed and confirmed; and, instead of the cord of evil habit dragging you down to perdition, the bond of holy habit, and the kindred bond of love, will draw you upward and onward to a world where the character will receive its final completeness and beauty, and where you will be strong, and great, and good, for ever, without the possibility of change or sin.

Jesus! the Name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life, and health, and peace.

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood avails for me.

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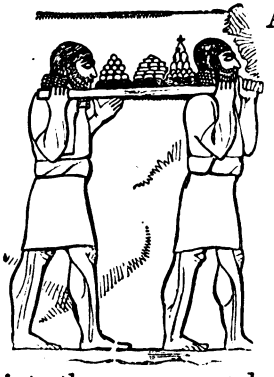
# THE MEN OF NINEVEH.




REPENTANCE OF THE KING OF NINEVEH.

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# The Men of Nineveh.



After nearly three thousand years, parts of the city of Nineveh have been disinterred. The great winged bulls, and the curiously sculptured slabs, now in the British Museum, give an insight into the manners, and customs, and social life of the ancient Assyrian people: they enable us to picture the great metropolis of the east as it was when the prophet Jonah visited it,—with its broad halls, its palaces, temples, and houses, vast gardens, fields, and pasture lands; and with its streets, the thoroughfares for busy thousands—statesmen, merchants, and artificers passing to and fro; and armies, with their heavy tramp, marching along the immense highways.

That place was a scene of luxury and vice, of superstition and idolatry. It was crowded with men whose iniquities cried to heaven for vengeance. But God, who saw more of its wickedness than man can imagine, looked on it in mercy, and sent Jonah to preach repentance to the people. It was not merely as mortals, but as immortals, that God contemplated them. They were not like the gourd—which came up in a night, and withered in a night—but they were beings to whom belonged an existence more enduring than the great works they had built up. It is an overpowering thought, as we look on any great city—on London, for example—to think that all the people who inhabit it are on their way to another world; and that, should it become a heap of ruins like Nineveh, the beings now crowding its streets will still live. We are led to ask—What will become of them all?—In what world will they live?—For what world are they preparing? A striking instance of compassion was it when God sent a prophet to Nineveh to warn the people to flee from the wrath to come. Is not God's conduct towards the cities of our land in the present day even more compassionate? When we read of the vices and crimes of London, for example; when we think of the horrid deeds which are done, and the malignant and licentious passions cherished; and then think of the gospel message, amidst all this ungodliness—of the nature and design of this message; when we remember that it brings tidings from God to man, announcing salvation through Jesus Christ; when we remember that it points to that Divine and glorious Mediator who, unlike Jonah, pleased not Himself,

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but freely gave up His very life for human redemption,—how great are God's mercy and love shown to be!

Jonah went through the streets, saying, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Wonderful was the impression—a moral miracle was wrought. The Hebrew messenger, by his simple denunciation, awes and subdues a whole city, and that, too, one, as is manifest from its recently discovered monuments, of the most proud, self-dependent, egotistical, and superstitious on the earth. There must have been Divine power working with the prophet, for the people "repented in dust and ashes;" and there was sincerity and earnestness in their fasting and prayers. Strangers entering the city, who had heard of its glory, must have been very much astonished. Ambassadors from other courts, who had seen it in the midst of its triumphs and revelries, might have thought it much degraded now. But in the eye of God and holy beings the place had never looked so well before. A people humbled before the Almighty in confession and prayer, really present a more noble sight than all the spectacles of gaiety and grandeur in a joyous city. In our metropolis there are no scenes comparable to the hidden ones of souls in earnest supplication with God, seeking the pardon of their sins through Jesus Christ, and strength to help them to subdue evil in this evil world. And God despised not the prayer of the Ninevites. He "saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He said that He would do unto them; and He did it not." "But it displeased Jonah" that God spared Nineveh. The folly and the heartlessness of the prophet serve to exhibit the more strikingly the compassion and love of Him who sent him. What a contrast here, as in a multitude of cases, is there between men's feelings towards their fellow-men and the feelings of God towards them! "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."[1] Not a supplication can you breathe but it is heard—not a tear can you shed but it is seen. The prayer of the poor old man, and of the heart-broken widow, and of the anxious little child, who out of the depths of their sorrow cry, not only for peace, but for pardon—not only for comfort, but holiness—is sure to be heard by the holy and merciful One.

The men of Nineveh did repent at the preaching of Jonah. The rough, earnest cry of the prophet did warn and alarm them. The change was held up by Christ as a warning to the men of His times: "The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here."[2] Is not this warning applicable to our times? Men favoured with greater advantages than the Ninevites abuse and dishonour them. It is not said, Forty days, and you shall be destroyed; but you are told

[1] Isa. lv. 7–9. [2] Luke xi. 32.

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of the love of God, and that this is "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" *yet you do not repent.*

He who speaks in the gospel is the ever-living, present, and gracious Lord. Whenever Christ is preached it may be said, "A greater than Jonah is here," even the Saviour Himself. He who came from heaven, who suffered on the tree, who paid the price of our redemption, is present by His Spirit; for He said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." He is near to you. He speaks touchingly and with tenderness. Do you feel you are not happy, because you are guilty and unholy? Christ tells you that. Do you feel a shrinking and a fear as you look forward? It is Christ preaching to you the truth more solemnly than Jonah could which makes you feel so; *yet you do not repent.* Do you see that you may escape—that there is a Rock to which you can flee, and which the earthquake cannot move nor touch—that yonder there is an open gate which leads to a bright and beautiful paradise? Jesus Christ tells you that; *yet you do not repent.*

That hoary-headed Ninevite bows down like a child, and weeps and cries for mercy; but *you do not.* That Assyrian woman wrings her hands with anguish, and implores deliverance; but *you do not.* That boy there, he too supplicates in sympathy with his parents, he prays the God of the Jewish prophet to have mercy; but *you do not.* The houses rang with earnest entreaties which went up to heaven after Jonah had preached. God saw there many a one mourning apart; but it is not so in your dwelling, and with your soul.

A few days' preaching, perhaps a few hours', availed with those Ninevites; weeks of preaching, years of preaching, sermons without number, have not availed with you. What a marvellous change went through that old city all at once! No change is seen in you. The messengers of God come and go; but there is *no change.* They plead and pray; but *there is no change*—they warn and invite; but *there is no change.* Providence has followed preaching. You have been smitten with breach on breach; losses, sickness, death, have torn away your earthly idols; God saying at the time, "Son, daughter, give me thine heart;" but *there is no change.* You have seen friends buried, and by the grave you have seemed to touch eternity; but there *has been no change.* Inward conviction there has been, solemn thought there has been, inquiry about religion there has been, dissatisfaction with your past course, desires for a something better, and perhaps resolves there have been; but *no vital, radical saving change*—no change like that which our Lord describes, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;" "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."[1]

[1] Matt. xviii. 3; John iii. 3.

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# THE BURSTING OF THE DYKE; OR, TRUE BELIEF.



THE INUNDATED VILLAGE.

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# The Bursting of the Dyke; or, True Belief.



Holland is a low, flat country, great part of which lies below high-water mark. Over this part the sea used to flow; but it has been kept back by the industry of man, and thus a large tract of good land has been gained.

Broad and high banks, called dykes, now keep the sea from overflowing the country, and the greatest care is taken to keep them in repair.

One winter's evening, a farmer in that part of the country was seated with his family round the hearth. It was a rough and stormy night. The wind howled, the rain and sleet fell fast; while now and then, when the wind was lulled, might be heard the angry dashing of the waves on the shore, not two miles distant.

The Dutchman could not hear the sound without thinking of his house and land, lying, as they did, far beneath the level of those angry waves. "I hope the dyke is all safe," said he. Hardly were the words out of his mouth, when hasty steps were heard without, and in another moment the door was burst open, and one of the labourers rushed in. "Master; master!" cried he, "the dyke has given way, and the sea is coming in!" The farmer started to his feet, the children clung terrified to their mother, the servants seemed bewildered with fright. But the farmer's orders were short and sharp, for there was not a moment to lose.

"Wife! get together the clothes, and all you can. Hans (to the man who had brought the news), get out all the horses, and harness them into the carts. You others, get the cattle together, and start off with them towards the town; and all of you be quick, quick! or the sea will be upon us." Soon the farm was deserted, and the farmer and his household were hurrying along the road: and within half an hour after the fields were under water, and a raging tide was rushing around and through the house.

When day broke, the farmer looked from the high ground where he had taken refuge, and saw before him a wide waste of water stretching for miles, dotted here and there with a few tall trees, and the tops of some buildings, which had been strong enough to resist the flood; among them he could see, in the far distance, the ruins of what had been but twelve hours before his own happy home. But he and his were safe. He had believed the report, and fled. Had he disbelieved, or even delayed, both he and they must have perished in those waters.

There is another report, as true, and

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even more important, but not so readily believed and acted upon. The prophet Isaiah complains, "Who hath believed our report?"[1] as if it were believed by few, or almost none. What is this report? Let us hear it in the prophet's own words:

"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."[2]

This report tells us two things. *First*, that we are transgressors, guilty of iniquity: that we have gone astray like wandering sheep, turning every one to his own way. *Secondly*, we learn that One has suffered in our stead, that the innocent has borne the punishment of the guilty, that the stripes which we deserved have been endured by Him, and that thus we are healed; the atonement has been accepted, our peace has been made.

The prophet wrote seven hundred years before Christ came, yet it was of Christ that he wrote. He it was who was thus "wounded for our transgressions," and "bruised for our iniquities." It was upon Him that our iniquity was laid, it is by His stripes that we are healed. This is the report which the prophet complains would not be believed. Men would neither see their danger nor flee to the Saviour. They would not believe themselves to be transgressors, and therefore would not care for the tidings that "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

[1] Isa. liii. 1. [2] Isa. liii. 5, 6.

But do men indeed refuse to believe the gospel? Is not the religion of Christ spread over a great part of the earth? and is not our own country a Christian land? Surely here at least the report is believed.

Yes, in one sense it is believed, but not as it ought to be believed. Suppose that when the man rushed in with the news the farmer had replied, "Very well, I believe you," and had then turned round to finish his nap by the fireside, and given himself no further concern about it; what should you say to such conduct? Surely you would conclude that the report was *not* believed. The farmer's words, "I believe you," would seem a mockery. What! believe that the dyke has burst, and yet sit still in your chair? Believe that ruin and death are rushing down on you, and do nothing to escape? Impossible! He cannot believe. He must look upon it as an idle tale.

Yet you yourself may be treating the gospel report in this very way. Thousands do; perhaps *you* do. They dwell in a Christian land, they attend a place of Christian worship, they know what the Bible says about sin and salvation, and yet they do not flee to Christ. They sit still. They are content to remain as they are. They go on in a round of outward observances, if they do even as much as that; and all the while they profess to believe that "the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night;"[1] that whosoever is not written in the book of life shall be cast into the lake of fire.[2] Wonderful! To believe in eternal danger, and not flee from it! To believe in the atoning blood, and not seek it! To know

[1] 1 Thes. v. 2. [2] Rev. xx. 15.

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of a free salvation, and take no step to gain it! If this be to believe, then I grant you that men do believe the report of the gospel. But if belief like this be only a mockery and a name, then I ask you whether the prophet's complaint is not true of vast numbers in a Christian land—"Who hath believed our report?"

Consider the report once more, and its deep importance. It is a report about your *soul*. You, like the farmer, would start up in a moment if any report were brought to you of danger threatening your property or your life. And will you sit unconcerned when the danger is to your soul? Again, the farmer knew already of a place of safety, the higher ground on which the neighbouring town stood: the report was merely a report of danger: whither to flee he knew before, though he might doubt whether he had time to reach the spot. But the gospel brings tidings of both; tells of danger, and points to safety; both shows you your need, and shows it fully supplied in Christ. Is this a report to be treated with indifference? Besides, the farmer was warned merely by one of his own men. Now, that man might have been unworthy of belief, or prone to exaggerate. Or the farmer might have thought him mistaken — that he had heard a false report himself—that his ears or his eyes had deceived him. But the report brought to you comes from God Himself. "The axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."[1] "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."[2]

Reader, the only real belief is such as the farmer showed. He believed the report, fled, and was saved. Do thou likewise. Believe, as he believed. Believe, and flee. "Awake, thou that sleepest." "Escape for thy life." Flee to Christ. The farmer heard the warning but once; you have heard the report many times. Let not this make you presume. Rather let it make you fear to hear it in vain any more. God will not always send warnings to those who will not be warned, or messages of mercy to such as will not receive them. "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation."[3] May the Holy Spirit incline you now at once to believe with the heart.

[1] Matt. iii. 10. [2] Matt. xxiv. 44. [3] 2 Cor. vi. 2.

Pass me not, O mighty Spirit:
Thou canst make the blind to see.
Witnesser of Jesu's merit,
Speak some word of power to me,—Even me.

Pass me not—Thy lost one bringing,
Bind my heart, O Lord, to Thee.
Whilst the streams of life are springing,
Blessing others, oh, bless me!—Even me.

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# THE DEBT CANCELLED.



JOAN OF ARC MAKING HER REQUEST TO THE KING.

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# The Debt Cancelled; or, the Reward of Joan of Arc.



In the tax roll for the district in the east of France, in which lie the two parishes of Greux and Domrémy, it was the custom for nearly four hundred years to leave blanks in the receipt column for these two places, and to write against them the following words: "*Cancelled on account of the Maiden.*"[1]

The allusion is to Joan of Arc, born at Domrémy in the year 1412, and who, though a poor uneducated peasant girl, impelled by her strong convictions that she was raised up to chase away the English, then occupying the largest and fairest part of France, and to restore the country to the French king, by her personal bravery and perseverance, actually effected this object, inspiring the downcast Frenchmen with courage, and the invading Englishmen with terror. It was at her request that the exemption was effected. In the year 1429, when she was in the full tide of her brief, but bright career of conquest, the king requested that she would name what favour he should bestow on her as a public reward for her conduct. She merely asked that her native village should be perpetually exempted from the burdens of taxation. The grant was made. The document recites that it was done, "in favour and at the request of our well-beloved Jean the Maiden, considering the high, remarkable, and useful service which she has rendered, and is still rendering, day by day, in the recovery of our dominions." This exemption continued to be respected down to the days of the first French revolution, when it was abolished.

So surpassingly great were the services of the Maiden, that no true patriot could complain of the concession. It availed for thousands who were entirely unconnected with her, save as inhabitants of the place where she had spent her childhood. They acquired no merit by her actions, though she had earned anything that the prince could properly bestow. The favour granted, however, being founded on actual deserving, and bestowed by sovereign authority, was indisputable. True, it was a piece of good fortune to the villagers; but no one else had any right to complain, whilst they rejoiced in the free gift.

[1] "Néant à cause de la Pucelle."

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This interesting historical fact may serve, however, inadequately to illustrate another, which pertains, not to the history of a nation, but to that of the world; and to privileges, not of a lifetime, but of endless duration and infinite importance.

In the great book of account, which is to be brought forth and examined at the last day, there is written against the names of such persons as are sincere believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners, in the place of the summary of their sins, words like these: "Cancelled by the blood of the Lamb."

God made man holy and free. Man by transgression fell; and we inherit both the causes and consequences of his sin—the tendency to evil-doing, and the liability to punishment.

Our heavenly Father provided, as the only possible remedy in this great calamity, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;"[1] "The blood of the everlasting covenant."[2] By the gospel He proclaims to man the fact of the remedy, and the promise of pardon and restoration thereby.[3]

In the fulness of the appointed time, Christ came into the world, took our nature, experienced our trials, fully obeyed the holy law, and died a propitiatory sacrifice for the sin of mankind. His voluntary act in so doing is the act of God; and thus, by its infinite value, lays a foundation for the forgiveness and acceptance of all who would avail themselves of it. Christ, "when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;[4] and there, as our heavenly Intercessor, He carries forward the results of His great work.

This transaction required amazing sacrifices on the part of our Divine Redeemer. It originated in His own infinite love for sinners of the human race, and in His infinite regard for the righteous government of God. It was prosecuted with unwavering courage and unfailing love. "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame."[1] It fully satisfies all the requirements of the case, and reflects wisdom and love equally in every aspect. Its language is, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;"[2] and, "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him."[3] Its ruling motive is, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."[4]

Revolutions may abolish man's gifts, as was the case with Joan of Arc's reward; human records may be lost or destroyed: but God's gifts are safely registered amidst the immutable things of eternity. Though heaven and earth pass away, yet "one jot or one tittle" of His Divine provisions shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.

The nature of the case requires that in spiritual things the merciful exemption secured and promised should be claimed and pleaded. Salvation is exhibited in a manner requiring that we should make it our deliberate choice. Our blessed

[1] Rev. xiii. 8. [2] Heb. xiii. 20.
[3] Isa. liii. 4; Luke xxiv. 44. [4] Heb. i. 3.

[1] Heb. xii. 2 [2] Rom. viii. 1. [3] Heb. vii. 25.
[4] John iii. 16.

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Lord having found a ransom, God the Holy Spirit states its provisions; condescends in the Scriptures to urge, explain and recommend its adoption; and beseeches us "to be reconciled to Him." Sinful man, who is the subject of all these arrangements, is wrought upon through Divine grace by the appeal, is thus made willing in the day of God's power, and his language is, "I will arise and go to my Father, and say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son."

The villager of Domrémy was not too proud or too indolent to accept his exemption; but the world is full of instances of sinners too proud or too careless to seek the salvation of their immortal souls. It is the sad fact that this proud, indifferent temper is one of the most insidious and dangerous symptoms of the spiritual malady under which we labour; rendering needful the aid of a power stronger than our own, in order to our conversion to God. This too is provided, and, like the other fruits of Christ's atonement, it is to be personally acquired by simply and sincerely asking for it. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" [1]

We may well be thankful that we are permitted to give evidence of our title to the blessings of present and eternal salvation, not, like the natives of Domrémy, by records which may be forgotten or denied, but by the open fact of our own personal faith in the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the testimony of our conduct showing that we do belong to the family of God, in Christ Jesus, by a living, loving, working belief. If we are truly His, then we may rejoice; for in the last great day of account, against every such name there will be found written the everlasting ordinance applicable to our sins: "CANCELLED FOR CHRIST'S SAKE."

"Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

"Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back."

"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee."

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us."

"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross."

"By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

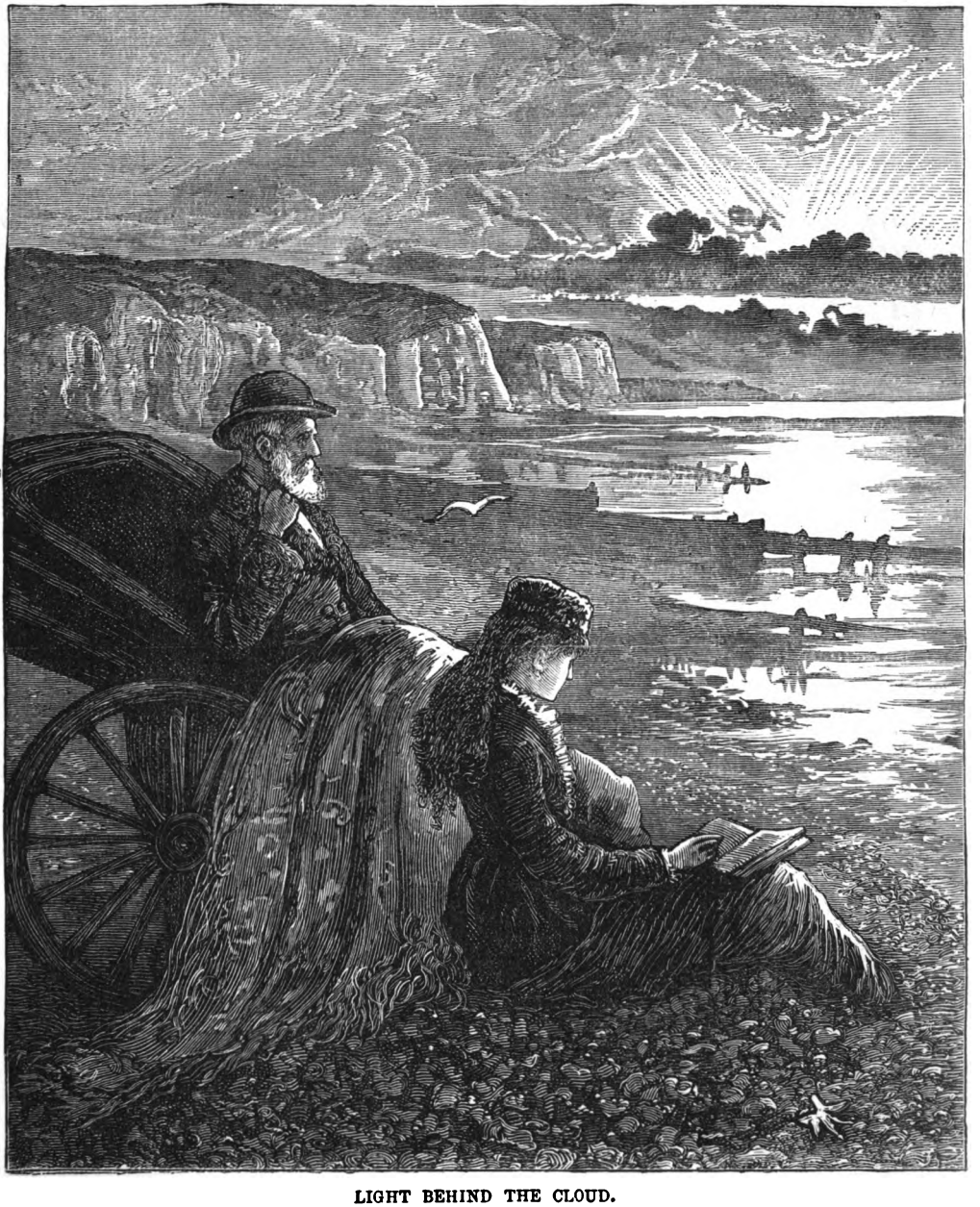
"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." [1]

[1] Luke xi. 13.

[1] Micah vii. 19; Isa. xxxviii. 17; Isa. xliv. 22; Psalm ciii. 12; Col. ii. 14; Heb. ix. 12; Rom. iii. 24.

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# LIFE A VAPOUR.



LIGHT BEHIND THE CLOUD.

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# Life a Vapour.



When the farmer rises early on a summer morning and looks out on the valley and the silver stream, he may often see a white cloud of vapour overhanging them; but suddenly the light breeze awakes, and the sluggish vapour begins to roll up the hill-side. Soon the sun has crowned the height, and darting his warm beams on the fleecy cloud beneath, he speedily disperses its moisture, and in a few moments it disappears. Or again, the boy, tired of play, lies down on a grassy bank in a beautiful day in June, and turns his eyes upward towards the blue sky; there is a little cloud floating there, and as he gazes on it, lo! it becomes smaller and smaller, until at last it is seen no more. And such, reader, says a holy apostle, is "*your* life." Yes, *yours*. It is a truth which comes home *to you*. It claims *your* personal attention, and demands that *you* shall ponder it well. "For what is your life? It is even A VAPOUR, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."[1]

Perhaps you may with some impatience say, "What is the use of telling me this? I know very well that I must die at one time or another, and that life is short at best." But it is one thing to admit the truth of a statement when you cannot resist the evidence of its reality, and another thing to embrace it as one of *personal and paramount importance*. May it not be that you are secretly flattering yourself that death is still at a great distance from you, and that thus you are tempted to defer immediate attention to the concerns of eternity? Multitudes are thus deluding themselves, and *perhaps* it may be so with you.

Consider then that while life is indeed "a vapour," it is *within its brief limits that your state and prospects must be settled for eternity*. It is strange, but true, that you are mortal, and yet immortal. If your "spirit" were like that of "the beast" which "goeth downward," then you might justly be quite free from anxiety or alarm about the future. But we are assured, on Divine authority, with regard to the hour of dissolution, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."[1] Therefore let every reader thus commune with his own heart: "I am a dying creature, subject at any moment to the stroke which shall sever me for ever from the things which are seen and temporal; and yet I am destined to

[1] James iv. 14.

[1] Eccles. xii. 7.

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become conversant with the things unseen and eternal. I have a soul which will survive, and shall for ever have a conscious being, either in the endless bliss of heaven, or amid the awful agonies of hell. And as I sow, so must I reap; as I continue in my sins and a stranger to Christ, so must wrath come upon me to the uttermost, on the one hand; or on the other, as I flee for refuge to Jesus, 'the hope set before me,' so shall I win and wear the crown of glory."

Yes, this life is indeed the seed-time, whose harvest shall be reaped in eternity. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." While neighbours, acquaintances, relatives, are dead and gone, you are spared; and it is yours now to read on this page a gracious message from God, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."[1] Oh that your heart were softened by the Holy Spirit to give heed to such words of mercy as these! Think of the matchless grace of Jesus, the only Saviour of sinners. And hark! He cries, "Look unto ME, and be ye saved: . . . for I am God, and there is none else."[2] If you will but come to Him *now*, however long you have neglected and despised Him, and however vile and polluted have been your heart and life up to this moment, yet He is ready to say to you, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will not remember thy sins."[1]

But perhaps you are young and strong, and you may be saying in your heart, "I at least may delay;" and therefore you have stopped your ears and barred your heart to the entrance of the truth. You are laying the reins on the neck of your lusts; you are profaning the holy Sabbath; you are among those who make a mock at sin; your companions are the careless and the wicked; you set at nought all pious counsel, and you have given yourself over to work all uncleanness with greediness. You live and act as if God and Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and a judgment day, were but creations of the fancy, and are as reckless and secure as if you had made "a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell" that they should never harm you. But the secret whisper of conscience must sometimes tell you that there is an awful day hastening on, when, if still impenitent and unconverted, "the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place."[2] "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."[3]

And remember that the dying hour, the hour of anguish, and the prostration of mind which accompanies it, will not be the time to seek for mercy. The peace of God, already obtained by a living faith in Christ, can alone keep your mind and heart in that awful crisis.

Perhaps you have never bowed your knees to ask counsel of God with regard to your business: you plan for "to-

[1] Isa. lv. 6, 7. [2] Isa. xlv. 22.

[1] Isa. i. 18; xliii. 25. [2] Isa. xxviii. 17. [3] Heb. x. 31.

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morrow" without any reference to His will. If so, you are practically an atheist, living "without God," disobedient to the command, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him."[1] For *you* to say, "If the Lord will, we will do this, or that," is far from you. There *is* a will mightier than yours. Your "breath is in your nostrils." Oh! be persuaded to abase yourselves in humility before that God in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways.[2] From this hour begin to take a wisdom higher than your own as your guide, and with heart and lip together say, "If the Lord will, we will do this, or that."

The *true Christian must die, and his life is like that of other men, "a vapour."* But how exalted the Christian's privilege! How great his happiness! For he can say, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."[3] Yes! for every child of God "to live is Christ." He can say with Paul, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."[4] For you "to die" will be "gain." Yours will be the "gain" of immediate deliverance from all trials, from all temptations, and from all sin; from the fear of death, nay from death itself. A holy man once wrote a good book with this title, "*The Death of Christ the Death of Death;*" and we read that Jesus died, that "through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."[1] In the prospect, then, nay in the presence of "the last enemy," trust in Jesus, and your souls shall be calm and serene.

Cry then, reader, at once, to God for His Spirit's grace to lead you to exercise "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." If you have no drawings of heart to the infinitely glorious Being who made you; if you do not see the sin of not loving God with all your heart, or of preferring the world's company to the society of God, then you are "dead in trespasses and sins."[2] You are among those who are "the children of wrath."[3] There must be a change wrought in you, else you can neither serve God here nor inherit His kingdom hereafter. Conversion or condemnation; renewal of soul, or the second death—such are the alternatives! "Ye MUST be born again;" for, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."[4]

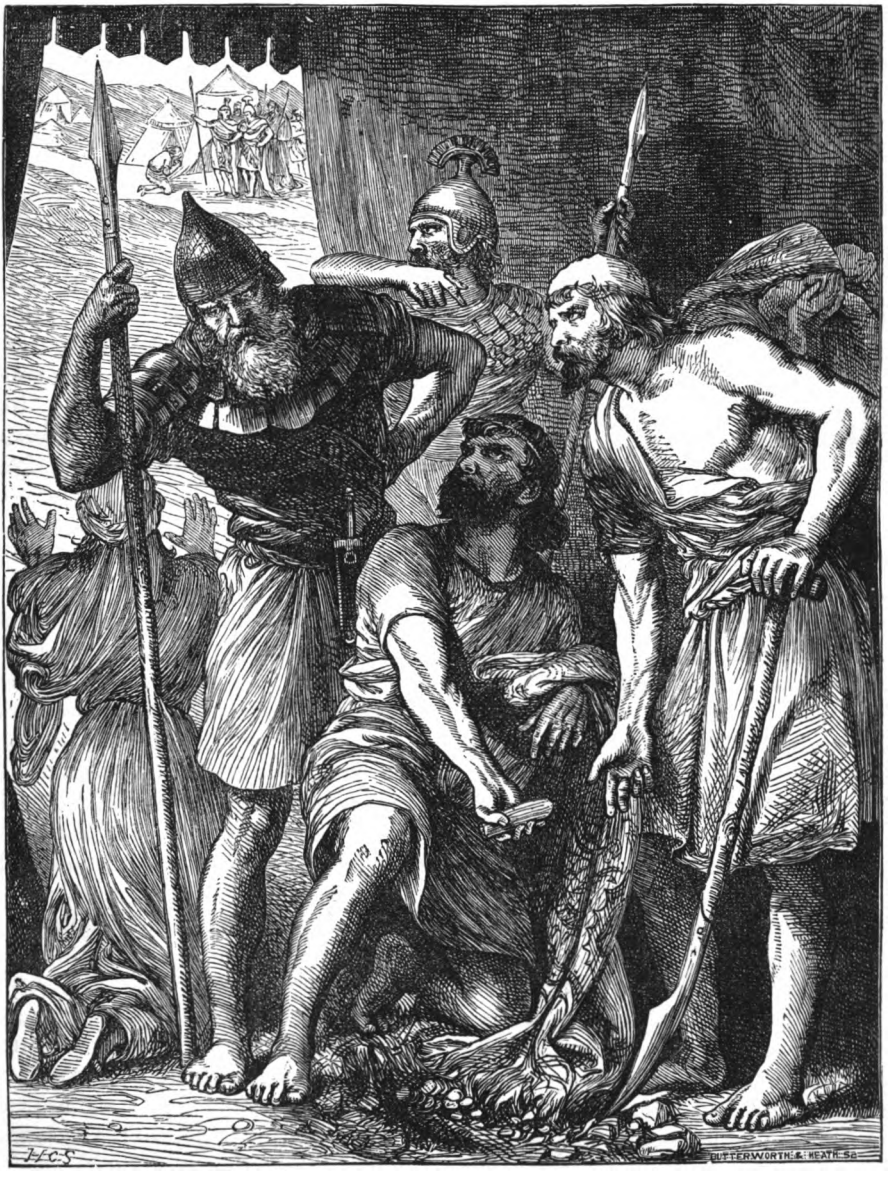
Such a change is too hard for a man, but not for the Lord. There is no want of willingness in Him, for "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."[5]

[1] Prov. iii. 6. [2] Dan. v. 23. [3] Phil. i. 21. [4] Gal. ii. 20, 21.

[1] Heb. ii. 14, 15. [2] Eph. ii. 1. [3] Eph. ii. 3. [4] John iii. 3. [5] John iii. 16.

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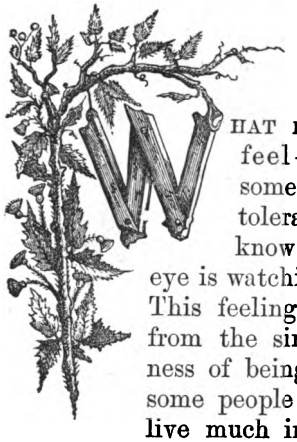
# The All-Seeing Eye.



DISCOVERY OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE.

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# The All-Seeing Eye.



What restraint do we feel—a restraint sometimes almost intolerable—when we know that a human eye is watching our doings! This feeling does not arise from the simple consciousness of being seen, because some people are obliged to live much in the company of others; but from a sense of being *watched*, in order that our doings may be examined and reported upon.

A Polish gentleman, who was confined in a Russian prison for a political offence, has recorded the misery which he endured from being daily watched through a window in the door of his cell—the two eyes of the watcher being always upon him. "No one," says he, "can imagine what an indescribable torture it is to a man to see and to know that a watch is kept upon every movement. Will it be believed?—from the earliest dawn I longed for the night, even after a night which had been already very long and rayless; for then, at least, I was protected from those two eyes. Sometimes, impatient and distracted, I would go up to the loophole and oppose my feverish glare to those two persecuting eyes; and then I laughed like a savage, when I obliged the man to turn away for a moment."

But how stands the case with us in regard to the watchful eye of the all-seeing God? He watches all our deeds and purposes, and keeps an account of them for the great Judgment. He also knows the wretched excuses which we make to ourselves and others for our foolish and wicked doings. Surely, then, a sense of the Divine watchfulness ought to produce a restraining influence upon our conduct. Who would commit a crime in presence of the officers of justice, and whilst they were watching his every movement? Do we really believe that God sees us when we sin, and that He will "bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil?"[1] And can we remain unmoved by this truth? Many, alas! remain wholly uninfluenced.

When Achan secretly took and concealed several valuable articles from among the spoils of Jericho, in direct violation of God's command, God brought his guilt to light by a proceeding which showed His own omniscience. He directed all Israel, according to their tribes, to be gathered together, that He might select by lot first the tribe, then the family or kindred, then the household, then the

[1] Eccles. xii. 14.

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individual members of the household, among whom the guilty man should be found, and lastly, the guilty Achan himself, who, when selected, could not deny his sin.[1]

When the king of Syria found all his plans of attacking Israel frustrated, and suspected treachery among his own officers or servants, one of them answered, "Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber."[2] The foolish king then thought that he would stop these communications by seizing the prophet himself, and accordingly sent an army to take him. But this also was seen and provided against by the same all-seeing God who had revealed the king's purposes to the prophet.

But there is a more cheering view of the watchfulness of God. "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous," watching to do them good. A king surrounded by a host of body-guards is not so safe as a good man under the Divine guardianship. God sees the first intention of any one to injure you, and He can easily make it of none effect; or, if He suffer it to be carried out, He can overrule it for your future good.[3] The poor and forlorn sometimes think that no one cares for them; but they ought rather to say, "I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me."[4] If you look around you may perhaps not see any sympathizing face; but if you look up, you will see by faith the eye of your heavenly Father watching over you with tender pity.

We cannot imagine a more destitute case than that of poor Hagar in the wilderness; but an angel met her, told her that the Lord had heard her affliction, and spoke also of God's purposes of kindness towards her. Then, in astonishment, she exclaimed, "Thou God seest me."[1] Yes, God saw her when man forsook her; and, in her subsequent wanderings, she found that His eye watched over her in mercy, and that He suffered her not to faint.[2]

We have seen a child exercising himself in swimming in sight of his approving father, and showing a confident boldness which he would not have had if he had been alone. Whilst his father's eye watched his movements, he knew that he would not be in any danger. In fact, he trusted entirely to the discretion and the helping hand of his father. And should not a child of God have holy confidence when in the path of duty, seeing that the eye of Providence constantly regards him? Is there a spot on the earth or sea from which you cannot look up and say, "Our Father, which art in heaven?" If not, there is no place on the earth where a believer should entertain a fear or doubt of the Divine protection.

A traveller, who set out on his journey deeply conscious that the eye of God was upon him, has recorded his experience in the following terms: "I have travelled in a variety of ways, and in different countries. I have often been in danger, as it is usually called, from storms on the sea and land, from pestilence and other noxious diseases, from wild men and wild beasts, in the desert and in the wilderness, amidst barbarians and fierce bigots; but I never feared evil, for I

[1] Joshua vii. [2] 2 Kings vi. 12.
[3] Rom. viii. 28. [4] Ps. xl. 17.

[1] Gen. xvi. 13. [2] Gen. xxi. 17–19.

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knew that my Father, God, was there. Sometimes there has been but a step between me and death; but in that step there was plenty of room for God and guardian angels to interpose and avert the threatening destruction. And, whether the Lord has seen fit to honour this faith, or has simply been pleased to show forth His saving power, it has so happened that I have never met with an accident so as to be injured by it."

It was a dark and stormy night, and the wild wind curled the raging billows, and tossed their foam on high. A little vessel was trying to make headway against the gale; but the mariners, spent with toil, could make no progress. A few men were in that little ship who were the hope of the Christian church: should they be drowned, the prospects of the world might be changed, and Satan might triumph. The sailors were bold and hardy, but they were only men; and their strength failed them. True; but there was One on the top of the mountain, communing with His heavenly Father, and His eye was fixed on that little vessel which contained His disciples,[1] and it could not perish, for Jesus preserved it by His power.

"Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me."[1] So the prodigal is seen a great way off.[2] His Father's eye is upon him. His love keeps him from perishing in his sins; and He watches the first sighing of his contrite heart, to direct him on the homeward path.

When Paul, the persecutor, was struck down in his mad career, the Redeemer, who had long watched his evil course, now saw his penitential feeling manifested in a heartfelt prayer, and immediately sent a message of mercy to him. Thus Paul, through faith, obtained the forgiveness of his sins, and the renewing power of the Holy Ghost;[3] and, in all his subsequent wanderings, he knew that the same eye which once marked his sins now watched over him in mercy, to preserve him from every danger until his mission on earth should be accomplished.

Let us, then, endeavour to live under a sense of the truth, "Thou God seest me." Being reconciled to God through the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and having received the adoption of sons, let us trust Him as our Father, and rejoice in the assurance that His loving eye rests upon us every moment. So shall we say with holy triumph, "I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."[4]

[1] Matt. xiv. 24, and Mark vi. 48.

[1] Ps. cxxxix. 7–10. [2] Luke xv. 20.
[3] Acts ix. 9–17. [4] Ps. lxxiii. 23, 24.

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# EARNESTNESS.




THE MEN SEIZED THEIR OARS AND PULLED FOR THEIR LIVES.

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# EARNESTNESS.



EEK," "strive," "press," and words of similar meaning, are used in the Bible to show that much earnestness of soul should be employed in the work of true religion. This agrees with the greatness and importance of the subject. The end of religion is to escape from the curse of God's broken law, from the hateful bondage of sin, and from the unspeakable terrors of the wrath to come: to attain a full and free salvation through Christ; to know, enjoy, and glorify God; to secure a heavenly treasure, a glorious inheritance, an unfading crown, a mansion of eternal bliss. Can any one think that this is to be accomplished by less earnestness than is given to the fleeting objects of time and sense? Can he suppose that, whilst the whole heart and mind are engaged in worldly things, he can escape from eternal death, and enter into everlasting life, by a few languid desires, listless prayers, and heartless services?

I was sailing along the coast of Italy in a *speronara*. This is a long boat, one part being covered to make a cabin; and it is propelled either by sails or oars, or both, according to circumstances. The Italian crew were a lazy, timid set of men, always creeping close by the land and hauling the boat ashore when the wind was contrary. This made the voyage very tedious, and sometimes dangerous. As we were passing a part of the coast composed of very high rocks, which occasionally stretched out into the sea, from which quarter the wind was then blowing, one of these promontories appeared before us, and it was needful to double or go round the cape. In attempting to do so, a strong breeze took the vessel aback, and drove it towards the rocks. In a moment, down went the sail, and ten men seized their oars, and pulled for their lives. It was the only time that they ever showed anything like energy. But all was at stake. For a few minutes the issue hung in suspense. The wind seemed to prevail, and the *speronara* was slowly drifting against the perpendicular cliffs. Then there was life in those men. With death-like silence, they put their whole strength into their limbs as they pulled at the oars; and a temporary lull in the breeze enabled them to make sufficient head-way to escape the danger.

There was earnestness suitable to the occasion. And shall a soul placed in similar circumstances be less earnest to escape ruin? Is not every unconverted sinner sailing along the coast of destruction? And may not death, like the

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breeze, dash him at any moment against a rock of ruin, and wreck him on the shores of a lost eternity? Reader, you ought to give yourself no rest, but continue in importunate prayer to the Saviour, until you are delivered from the curse of the broken law, and "being justified by faith, have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"[1] so that you may henceforth sail safely to a heavenly haven.

Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also. There will be earnestness of endeavour to secure those objects on which the desire is set. It was harvest-time; but the weather was very unfavourable for the husbandman. The crops were cut; but they could not be dried and got in. The farmers were almost in despair. Their wheat would be spoiled. At last the sun shone forth, and cheered their drooping spirits. The corn was dried, and was ready to be carried home. But again it rained. Once more it cleared up, and the morning shone brightly; but the barometer indicated change. Then, how those fields glowed with work! All the men and horses in the neighbourhood were in motion. They laboured with a long continuous effort to house the crops; and near midnight the labourers were still busy in the fields, though they could scarcely see the waggons on which they were throwing the precious sheaves. Earnestness seemed to enlighten their eyes and strengthen their arms, till the fields were cleared. Next day it rained: but the harvest was safe. These men were right. They actively used the time and means which a merciful Providence afforded them, and they succeeded.

[1] Rom. v. 1.

Those who show the same earnestness in the work of salvation, will not fail of attaining to life everlasting. And what a glorious harvest is before us! Are there not manifold promises, "exceeding great and precious," the fulfilment of which we are exhorted to seek? And is not the reward *sure* to those who seek aright? "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." The degree of energy with which we seek salvation should correspond with the unspeakable importance and grandeur of that salvation. For if you could put together all the wealth, the honour, the greatness, and the pleasures of this world, and if you could enjoy them all for threescore years and ten—yet, one hour of heaven would outweigh them all. How then should an *eternity* of bliss and glory be estimated! Yet it is all a free gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. We need only *seek and receive* it: it is far too glorious for any man to deserve in the least.

Many who acknowledge that "one thing is needful," and that the interests of eternity are much more important than those of time, yet live as if this truth never influenced their hearts. They are occupied with so many concerns of life, that their religion is driven up into a little corner of time, and is there stifled by a number of intruding thoughts. They have so many things to do, that they neglect the one which is most important. They may not run after unlawful pleasures or forbidden joys; but their minds and hearts are so engaged with things that would be proper and even laudable in their places,

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that their attention is diverted from the most important concern.

Martha, of Bethany, has received the Saviour under her hospitable roof. Intent upon His heavenly mission, He forgets the weariness of the road, and His own want of food, whilst He is dealing out the bread of life to a few hungry souls. Now, Martha, now is the time for being blessed. The Master will forgive you if the supper you provide be not very sumptuous: for the best entertainment you can give Him is a devoted heart. Martha thinks otherwise. She loves Jesus indeed, and honours Him as her Saviour; but at this time she is anxious to mark her respect by her outward attentions. At another season these attentions might be commended, for the Lord blessed a poor sinful woman who lavished precious ointment upon His person. But she was at His feet. Martha was in the midst of busy preparation, and wished to take away Mary, her sister, from listening to the words of endless life, that she might have her help. Human things should give place to those that are Divine. The Saviour gently rebuked her for being so "careful and troubled about many things;" for, said He, "one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."[1]

Perhaps you do not come up even to Martha's state of mind at this time. With you there is no anxiety about religion, no thought about the Saviour. Religion only comes by the way, for a short time, on the Sabbath day. It is the shop, the market, or the house which occupies all your thoughts. Yours is not Martha's care, to feast her Lord, but the heathen's anxiety: "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" You forget that you have a heavenly Father who feeds the sparrows and paints the lilies, but loves His children more than birds and flowers of the field.

Oh! come to Jesus and hear His voice. Come, whilst the word of invitation is sounding. God is in earnest when He beseeches you to be reconciled. Christ was in earnest when He poured out His life's blood as an atonement for your sins. The Holy Ghost is in earnest when He says, "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." The shortness and uncertainty of life bid you be earnest. The glory of heaven which beckons you upward tells you to be earnest in seeking the kingdom; and the threatenings of hell warn you to be earnest in fleeing from the wrath to come. Even gloomy death seems to say from every open grave, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Pardon, peace, grace, and glory await the earnest soul. But there is no good thing promised to the indolent and lukewarm.

[1] Luke x. 42.

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# Pictures of Conscience.



SUN PICTURES.

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# Pictures of Conscience.



PREVIOUS to the introduction of photography there was an ingenious invention called the Daguerreotype, by which the rays of light were made to fall on a plate of copper with a silvered face, so as to print a picture of any object or scene placed before it. The copy was made in an instant, and everything, however small, which belonged to the object was shown distinctly, and remained permanently fixed.

But there is a more wonderful, more important, and more interesting work than this continually going on in every human soul, which may be compared to the process above described, and which may well be called the moral daguerreotype. A prepared tablet, most wonderfully made, exists within us, on which "the light" is painting and fixing scenes and objects, which can be called forth for our own observation, and which will all hereafter be brought out and spread in order before us, to our honour or shame, our joy or grief.

Many of these daily and nightly pictures consist of various views of ourselves, as we have appeared, acted, spoken, and thought in different scenes and companies;—there, by the power of the moral daguerreotype, every feature is preserved, the light and shade exactly fixed, and the resemblance made perfect, so that whenever conscience, of itself, or at the command of a superior power shall call forth any of these objects and scenes, they will be instantly recognised. Such undoubtedly is the power of memory and of conscience combined, that the whole history of our inner man is preserved and may be recovered;—sometimes it is recalled with an affecting and distressing vividness. None can doubt, from what they have experienced, that the great Being who has so marvellously gifted the human mind, can at His pleasure cause it to bring before it, either in this life or in the life to come, all its thoughts, and actions, and affections. From the registry within a man's own bosom, God now often draws testimonies which reprove, condemn, and terrify him; but when we know what deep secrets of sinful actions, what pictures of sinful thoughts are concealed in human souls, and that they must either be now repented of, or must hereafter produce self-condemnation before the judgment-seat, ought we not now to search out and confess our sins, and seek in faith that we may by grace obtain forgiveness through the precious blood of Christ, that these pictures of our conscience be not brought to light against us in that day which will leave no secrets

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of sin, in the impenitent and unbelieving, either unpublished or unpunished?

There are true pictures of many great and aggravated sins laid up with all their circumstances in your memory, which, if unrepented of and unpardoned, will certainly one day stare you in the face like frightful and ghastly forms which you would shudder to meet. You are perfectly conscious that you have had and indulged very wicked thoughts, that you have let them gain possession of your mind, and that you have taken a sort of pleasure in them. You could recall many sinful actions in years past, which you committed with the full consciousness that you were breaking God's law and incurring God's condemnation. It may be a very painful thing to call these to mind; but ought they not to be called to mind, so far as to make you feel ashamed of them, and grieved that you should ever have been so foolish and so wicked as to do them?

Is it not also certain, that conscience has striven on many occasions, when roused by some event or association of thought pointing that way, to bring those offences under review, that you might judge yourself on account of them; and have you not often remembered passages of Scripture that have called upon you to repent of your sins, as well as to recollect them; and yet you have neglected the faithful monitor, hushed its voice, and hurried your thoughts away to some more pleasing object?

And has not the truthful witness been compelled to be silent, because you would not hear? Yet the secret within the breast has been like a festering wound, never quite healed; you have felt it still burning and smarting. The picture in the conscience has only been covered over, not blotted out. You have refused to look at it, but could not efface it. It may be you have gone further, and tried to laugh off your feelings, or plunged deeper into sin, with the determination to confound conscience, to sear, and if possible to kill it. But you cannot always escape from painful reflection; and when the still and solemn moment comes, or the hour of pain, affliction, and alarm, then you know the terrible picture of the past only requires the light of conscience to shine upon it, and then it all again appears upon the imperishable tablet of your memory.

Does not your own reason assure you that it is better, wiser, and happier now to know the utmost of your sinfulness, while mercy may yet be found, rather than try to hide the truth from yourself? No good can come of trying to conceal our sins from our own consciences and from God. This will not blot them out "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."[1]

Another great truth, shining with Divine light, and clothed with Divine authority, claims your attention. God has made gracious and ample provision for the pardon of all your transgressions, and for the perfect deliverance of your conscience from the heavy and galling burden of your sins. The redemption of your soul from the curse due to your transgressions has engaged the mind of God. He has sent His Son "into the world, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting

[1] Prov. xxviii. 13.

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life." Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and even the very chief has found mercy; for with the Lord there "is plenteous redemption."[1] The terms on which forgiveness of all your sins is offered to you are the most gracious, and in accepting them Jesus Christ demands of you neither price nor penance, neither merit nor righteousness of yours: "Repent and believe," are His words; and "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."[2] The Saviour has satisfied all the claims of the Divine law—has paid a price of infinite value; and you may read the glorious truth for every believer: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."[3] Does the guilt of transgression defile your conscience? Here is that which can effectually purify your soul. Does the dread of meeting again the accusing recollection of all your offences, with all their aggravations, rob you of peace, and fill you with fear? Here is the Divine remedy, the effectual antidote: to them that believe in Jesus Christ, God says, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."[4] It is not conceivable that words should be plainer, or more appropriate to your case:—they contain all that your soul needs to make it pure, happy, and safe.

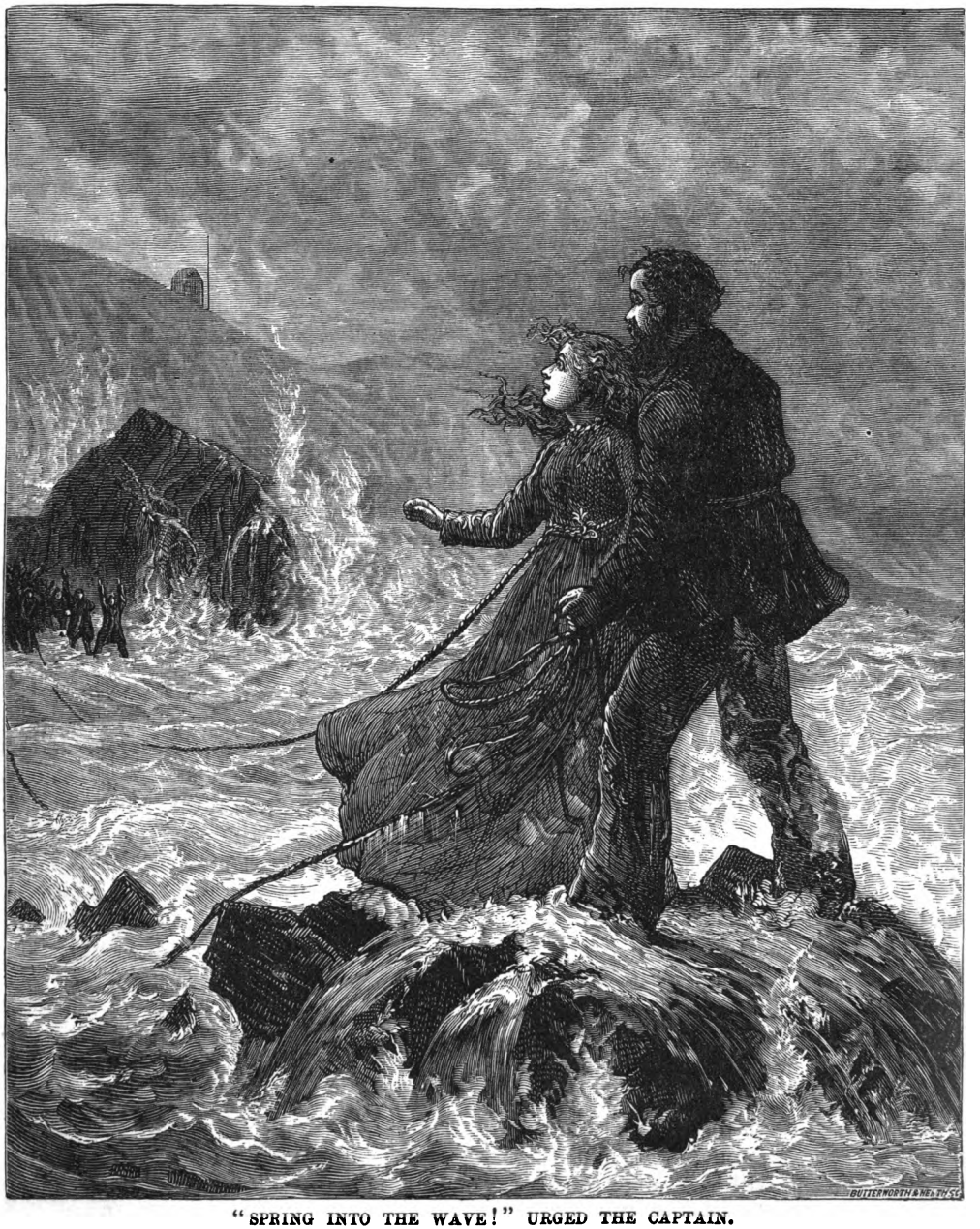
The return of guilty fears, the dread of Divine judgment, the beginnings of the wrath to come, can be avoided only in one way,—that is, God's way; not in your own way. He has appointed to receive you as a sinner only through His beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord. No man can come to God but by Him. Through Him, by faith in Him, you are assured of forgiveness, acceptance, and life everlasting. Why should you delay to lift up the desire of your heart to God, trusting in the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ? A sinful heart may shrink from approaching so holy and glorious a Being; but are not promises from God Himself enough to remove fear, and encourage hope? Is not the unspeakable gift God has bestowed upon the world enough to convince you of His sincerity, of His love, and of His willingness that you should be saved? Fear no refusal from Him who willeth not the death of a sinner—from Him who says, "Why will ye die?" But take the name of Jesus as your sole plea, the blood of Jesus as your sole offering, and implore forgiveness through that precious blood of Jesus which never has been, and never can be, pleaded in vain. The throne of God's grace is as open to you as to any other. The same blessings of pardon, acceptance, and reconciliation await you which others have found, whose consciences once were as dark and guilty and uneasy as your own, but which are now the abode of peace and joy in believing. All is kind solicitation and promise on the part of the Saviour. He does not merely say He will accept, but He says He will in no wise cast him out that cometh unto Him.[1] Go to the throne of grace, and plead the name of Jesus, and all the guilty pictures of thy conscience shall disappear.

[1] Psa. cxxx. 7. [2] Mark xvi. 16. [3] 1 John i. 7. [4] Heb. viii. 12.

[1] John vi. 37.

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# THE SHIPWRECK; OR, THE DANGERS OF DELAY.



"SPRING INTO THE WAVE!" URGED THE CAPTAIN.

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# The Shipwreck; or, the Dangers of Delay.



During a violent storm a trading vessel was driven upon a high rock on the western coast of England, and immediately became a total wreck. Many of the crew perished, but the captain and his wife were providentially enabled to reach the rock, and, clambering up it, to escape from the waves.

But all danger was not yet over. Their place of shelter was a crag, separated from the mainland by a deep channel, where the sea rushed with terrific violence between the rugged cliffs on either side. The cold was intense, and they had neither covering nor shelter. The tide was rising rapidly, and night was drawing on. It was plain that unless prompt assistance was rendered, they could not hope to survive.

Happily they were descried from the neighbouring shore, and a boat was immediately launched to attempt their deliverance. For the boat to approach the rock was found utterly impossible, and the only alternative was, to project a rope towards them from the shore by means of a rocket, and then to haul them through the surf within reach of the boat.

After many fruitless trials, the attempt to throw the rope was successful. The captain grasped the rope, by means of which a second was speedily sent on, and one was made fast to each person. The mountain waves with every successive flow surged up to their very feet; but receding laid bare the broken and pointed rocks which were spread out below. It was clear that their only way of deliverance was by springing into the wave at the moment of its highest swell, and thus being borne over the danger, while the boat's crew were on the alert, promptly to pull them on board.

The wife is first to make the attempt, and is instructed what to do. All is ready! The big wave swells full at her feet; "Now! NOW!" shouted the crew.

"Spring into the wave!" urged the captain, with passionate energy.

Alas! she trembles, hesitates, delays —only a moment; *but that moment is fatal.* She leaps towards the receding wave, falls upon the rugged rocks beneath, and the next moment is taken on board the boat, a mangled and lifeless corpse. The captain, ignorant of her hapless fate, follows her, takes the wave at the swell, and is saved.

Human life is not frequently endangered by a crisis so urgent as this, nor does the case often occur in which instant decision is thus necessary for its preservation. But the guilty soul is ever in danger, and the moment even now passing may exert an influence unspeakably important upon its eternal destiny.

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Sin has made shipwreck of human righteousness and human hope. "God is angry with the wicked every day." "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die!" Like the shipwrecked mariners, the unpardoned sinner stands upon narrow and precarious ground, while the waves of Divine justice threaten on every side.

Yet there is a means of deliverance. Mercy has come to his rescue. The lifeboat is at hand. Salvation is nigh. It is written; "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,"[1] "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things."[2] "He that hath the Son hath life."[3] And Christ declares, "Him that cometh to Me I will in nowise cast out."[4]

These things, reader, you have perhaps heard many times before. Probably it interests and gratifies you at this moment, to see them again plainly expressed. Suffer us however to assure you, that if you go no further than this, they will injure rather than help you. To know the way of salvation, without personally walking in it, is to sear your own conscience, harden your heart, despise the truth, and add to your sin. That which is required of you is, at once—this moment—while now the subject is before you, to avail yourself of the only means of salvation. "Now is the accepted time."

Now,—because you have now a favourable opportunity. Early or sudden death may not, perhaps, be your lot. Your intellect may remain, to the end of life, in health and vigour. But though exempted from calamities, (and yet who can ensure you that exemption?) other causes may effectually rob you of hopeful opportunity. Overwhelming business may absorb you. Anxious cares may oppress you. Severe trials may so agitate, as to unfit you for the duty. The lasting infirmities of old age may becloud and impair your spirit. In any and all of these or like cases, though life be prolonged, the opportunity of repentance and saving faith may be gone. And if you are now free from them all, will you venture to delay? "Now!" sinner, "Now!"

Now,—because God commands it. He gives you life, lengthens your days, preserves your health, protects your peace, and prescribes your duty. He is your real Friend. He desires and delights to save sinners. He has devised and revealed the way of your redemption, and now waits to be gracious. He beseeches you to be reconciled to Him; and, knowing your infirmity and your danger, His providence and His grace combine to give you the present opportunity. And He commands you to improve it. Mark! it is God that speaks! "Come now, and let us reason together saith the Lord." "Behold, now is the accepted time."

Now,—for it will be easier now than at any future time. Many as your sins are, they are fewer now than they will be tomorrow. Hard as your heart is, it grows harder day by day. Strong as the influence of the world is, it grows stronger and stronger. Habits acquire force by indulgence, and the habit of procrastina-

[1] 1 Tim. i. 15. [2] Acts xiii. 38, 39.
[3] 1 John v. 12. [4] John vi. 37.

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tion most of all. You *must* some day or other resist and overcome the world and sin, if you ever turn to God at all. The effort will never be so easy again as at this moment. "Now is the accepted time."

Now,—because past delays have only deceived and endangered you. Perhaps you intend at some time to seek God. So far well. But possibly you can recal a season, many years ago, when you entertained that intention as firmly as you do now. If it had been then foretold that you would live till now unconverted and unchanged, would you have believed it? Have not similar seasons occurred in the interval, in which you have renewed your seemingly firm intention, and hoped and believed that long ere this it would be carried into effect? Yet, in spite of all, the work is still undone. Had death overtaken you in the interval, as it might have done, what would have been your condition? And will you again expose yourself to danger so awful, again venture all your eternal hopes upon resolutions by which you have been so often and so plainly betrayed? Let your own experience be your warning. Be wise, and wise at once.

Now,—for you have much to encourage you. You are now, perhaps, attentive, convinced, impressed, reflective, serious; your heart may be less hard, your spirit less worldly, your disposition less hostile to eternal things, than it sometimes is. Whatever may have induced feelings like these, they come from God. They give hope that your day of grace and mercy is not yet past. Jesus is the Intercessor for every penitent and contrite sinner. Oh, harden not your heart! Value and improve the precious opportunity. Cherish and obey the heavenly influence. Unite your prayers to those of your merciful High Priest. Everything combines to encourage hope and assure success. Yield your heart to Him in faith and love, and you are saved.

Friend, that to which you are urged is at once to flee from the wrath to come. Satan would have you delay, for he would thus accomplish your ruin. Your own heart inclines to delay, for by nature it loves its guilty pleasures, and shuns the cross. But God has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live."[1] Christ would have you decide, for He would lead you to glory. The Spirit would have you decide, that He may draw your heart to holiness and to heaven. Reason, Scripture, conscience, all echo the Divine admonition, "Now is the accepted time." Choose then your adviser and your friend. Will you listen to the world, or to conscience; to Satan, or to God? Will you learn saving wisdom at the feet of Jesus, or be the dupe of the Evil One's delusions? If your heart, indeed, incline to the path of peace, then act at once. Lose not a moment? Take at least one step! Implore the Spirit's aid, ere you cease to read; believe, trust, pray; and rest assured that before you call, God will answer; and while you are yet speaking He will hear.

[1] Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

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# A New Friend: How will You Welcome Him?



"CUT IT DOWN; WHY CUMBERETH IT THE GROUND?"

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# A New Friend: How will You Welcome Him?

A TRACT FOR THE NEW YEAR.



ANOTHER period of time is drawing to a close; soon we shall have passed the boundary line which separates the dying from the new-born year. We are expecting the speedy advent of a new, an untried friend—a friend of untold value — how will you welcome him? How did you welcome the old friend whose hours are well-nigh spent, and who is fast slipping away into the dim past? How did you welcome him, when, fresh and young, he dawned upon you? Did you see the new year in on your knees in prayer? and did you then put up the solemn vow that the new year should witness more consecration to the service of God? Or did you, with thoughtless levity, welcome it only as a fresh period for worldly enjoyment, dissipation, and gaiety? Has the Christian's vow been kept, or the worldling's wishes realised?

The year is fast passing away, to tell its own tale of solemn resolutions forgotten, of time misused, of opportunities wasted, of precious privileges neglected. The volume of the old year will soon be finally clasped; there will be no opening it again, no cleansing the stains on its once fair surface, no erasing the foul blots, no crossing out any sinful record once inscribed therein. The old friend is fast dying! Do you with deep regret listen to the sound of his receding footsteps? Do you wish that one precious day, or even hour, wilfully wasted and abused, could be restored to you? Too late now! A little while, and the last sands in the hour-glass will have run out, the last minute will have come—the now present year will have passed out of our lives for ever!

Old friend, we wave thee a last, a sad farewell! We have travelled over sunny hill-tops, and through cloudy valleys, hand-in-hand with thee; we have rejoiced in thy beauteous seasons, and goodness and mercy have followed us as we journeyed on together. Thou art leaving us now.

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But with noiseless footstep a new friend draws near, calling off our thoughts from the past, claiming our trust and confidence. Reader, again we ask you, How will you welcome him? A new lease of life given you by the author of life? Pause and think of the lovingkindness and mercy of that God whose claims on your service and obedience you have so long disregarded, even totally ignored. Against you, perhaps in the year just passed away, the awful sentence had trembled on the lip of offended justice, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" But mercy interposed with pleading accents, "Let it alone yet another year." Thus another year has been granted you; how will you welcome it? Will you go on in your heedless, sinful course through the days, and weeks, and months of the coming year, as you did through those of the past, and the years which preceded that?

Oh, stop and think ere it be too late. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."[1] God is now waiting to be gracious to you; He willeth not the death of any sinner; again He says to you, "My son, give Me thine heart." Oh, what a welcome with which to greet the first minutes of the new-born year, if with tears of penitence and sorrow you were heard to exclaim, casting away for ever the rags of filth and sin, "I will arise and go to my Father."

This new year is a gift from God, a fresh period of time allotted us to use in the service of its Giver: it is a precious talent committed to our care, to be employed and improved according to the ability of each—will you welcome it as such?

[1] 2 Cor. vi. 2.

Will you welcome this friend with a smile of hope? I will tell you how to look into the future without fear. It is by believing the text that "All things" (not some only) "work together for good to them that love God." Disease, adversity, bereavement, are they not His ministers, sent forth by Him to execute His wise and gracious purpose? If "all things" are made to work together for your good, surely you may with confidence look forward to another period of time, reposing perfect trust in His kind care who holds your interests so dear.

And you, suffering believer, on whom, perhaps, for many years God's afflicting hand has been heavily laid, do you mourn that the commencement of another year finds you still on your bed of sickness, though you had hoped and prayed that it might find you in that land of light, whose inhabitant no more says, "I am sick?" Courage, fainting heart! there is still some work left on earth for you. "They also serve who only stand and wait." It is yours, even on your bed of pain, to glorify your Saviour; and while you are longing for the morning of eternity, you may greet the first glimmering light of another year with notes of praise that you are still able to wait, if not to work, for Jesus.

"I wonder," remarked a suffering servant of God now at rest, "if I shall ever be able to preach again." With deep feeling a friend replied, "Your present life is the best sermon you ever preached." Yes, when the recollection and impression of spoken words shall have passed away, the remembrance of calm, patient, trusting, uncomplaining endurance of the will of God shall speak loudly and

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distinctly to the hearts of those who witness it. Take fresh courage then, afflicted one; let the new year be begun by you with a song of praise for the past, and of hopeful trust for the future.

"Thy God has said 'tis good for thee
To walk by faith, and not by sight:
Take it on trust a little while;
Soon shalt thou read the mystery right
In the full sunlight of His smile."

Christian pastor, will not you usher in the new year with notes of praise and thankfulness? Sunday-school teacher, will not you take up and prolong the strain? Over many failures, doubtless, you have to grieve—over many shortcomings to mourn; but you can still raise your banner, with "Ebenezer" inscribed upon it, and in His strength carry on His own, His peculiar work. Have you been toiling on through the long dark night of ignorance and sin with little or no result? At the summons to renewed effort be prepared with the ready response, "Nevertheless, Lord, at Thy word I will let down the net."

And now we stand face to face with this NEW FRIEND, who comes to us laden with so many responsibilities, duties, cares, joys, and sorrows. Like an open volume it appears; its first page presented to our view; its many leaves will be turned over one by one; and all some record must leave on the now fair and unsullied page. May we all strive that an impress of good, not of evil, be left thereon.

NEW YEAR, may God give us strength to use thee aright, cheerfully leaving the ordering of all events in His hand who doeth "all things well."

The Lord of earth and sky,
The God of ages, praise,
Who reigns enthroned on high,
Ancient of endless days;
Who lengthens out our trial here,
And spares us yet another year.

Barren and withered trees,
We cumbered long the ground;
No fruits of holiness
On our dead souls were found:
Yet doth He us in mercy spare
Another and another year.

Jesus, Thy speaking blood
From God obtained the grace,
Who therefore hath bestowed
On us a longer space:
Thou didst in our behalf appear,
And, lo, we see another year!

Then dig about our root,
Break up the fallow ground,
And let our gracious fruit
To Thy great praise abound:
Oh, let us all Thy praise declare,
And fruit unto perfection bear!

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# THE APPEAL.



HER WHOLE LIFE SEEMED WRAPPED UP IN THE CHILD'S LIFE.

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# The Appeal.



THERE was a widow, who had one only little child. She loved this child with all a mother's and a widow's fondness. Her whole life seemed wrapped up in the child's life: she only lived for it. But, sad to tell, while this little one was well and strong, nothing could persuade the widow to give her heart to God. But it pleased God to lay His hand on the child, so that it became very ill, and shortly after died.

Poor woman, she was now both widowed and childless. Her pastor went to see her, to pour, if possible, into her wounded heart the balm of Christian consolation. But he found the Lord had spoken to her before he came. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, the death of her child had been made a blessing to her, in leading her to submit to God, and to give herself to Christ in faith and love. She acknowledged her former hardness of heart, and said, "Ah, sir, I will tell you how it is: there was a shepherd, sir, and the shepherd had a sheep, and the sheep had a lamb. Long time the shepherd tried to get the sheep into his fold: he tried all ways, but all were of no use. So at last he took the little lamb in his arms, and placed it in the fold; and sure the sheep went in then quickly enough." From that time this poor childless widow lived a life of faith in the Son of God, in humble hope of a life of glory with Him hereafter.

Reader, have you ever thought in how many ways God speaks? The above narrative is quite true. How solemn and clear was God's voice to that poor widow by the death of her child! Through grace she listened, and was saved. Reader, perhaps God has spoken to you in some such way, and you have *not* listened, but turned away your ear, and would not hear. Fearful thought! —your Creator speaks, and you, His creature, refuse to hear. If your earthly father had spoken, you would probably have listened and obeyed: if your sovereign had condescended to address you, you would doubtless have gloried in the distinction, and hastened to execute his commands. But the Father of all, the Lord of heaven, the King of kings, has spoken to you from your birth till now: and unless you have believed the gospel of His Son, and are living the believer's new holy life, you have never yet answered, "Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth."[1] Think in how many ways God has spoken

[1] 1 Sam. iii. 9

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to you; for in truth it is not only when He speaks as He spoke to Abraham, or Moses, or Samuel, that His voice is uttered; but He now appeals to us.

God speaks *through your conscience,* that faculty within you which bears witness to what is right and what is wrong. Perhaps this conscience has become very insensible in you; you have hushed and stifled it whenever it tried to make itself heard; so that, being unenlightened by God's Spirit, unfed by God's word, unencouraged, uncared for, it almost ceases to speak. But, oh! while you now read, does it not once more bear witness, it may be for the last time, your thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another?[1]

God speaks *by creation.* Have you ever listened to this voice? or have you walked this earth and looked upon its wonders with scarcely any higher aim than have the beasts which perish? They only value it for the food it yields. Has creation no diviner object for you than bodily enjoyment? Do you ask—What does it tell of? It tells of God, its Maker, of His almighty power and Godhead, of His goodness in providing for the wants and gratifying the tastes of His creatures, and of His just displeasure against sin, which has brought death into the world, and a curse upon this beautiful earth: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handywork;"[2] and though "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now,"[3] yet still God "left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."[1] "For the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead."[2]

God speaks *by His daily providence.* You have read how He spoke to the poor widow by the death of her only child. It was a gracious voice to her, though it wrung her heart at first. She will thank God for it, for ever and ever. Reader, has God never spoken thus to you? have you ever lost a parent, a brother, a sister, or a child? and, it may be, you never listened to the sad solemn tones of that voice. Or perhaps the Lord has sometimes laid you on a bed of sickness, and pleaded with you there in solitude and silence; and you refused to hear. Perhaps He has dashed your earthly hopes to the ground, and brought you to great poverty: heard you no voice saying, "This is not your rest; lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth; labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life!"

Have you ever seen a careless ungodly man, in the prime of life, struck suddenly down by death; and yet heard no voice of warning? If your friend, by folly in business, had failed and suddenly become bankrupt, "Ah! poor fellow," you would exclaim, "here is a lesson for me; I must avoid that quicksand, or I shall be shipwrecked too." Cannot you take warning for your poor, precious, immortal soul? But there is a yet softer, tenderer voice in God's providences, when He speaks in mercy. O reader, this is His usual voice; have you not twenty mercies

[1] Rom. ii. 15. [2] Psa. xix. 1. [3] Rom. viii. 22.

[1] Acts xiv. 17. [2] Rom. i. 20.

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for one trial? He would convince you that God is love. All you are and have is from Him. Have you never thanked Him, never loved Him? "Despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance: but after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath?"

God speaks *by His word.* This probably you will not question. If a friend sent a letter to you, signed with his name, sealed with his seal, with proofs that it came from him, you would feel as bound to listen to his message, and to act upon it, as if he had spoken to you face to face. God puts His name to the Bible: it comes with this authority, "Thus saith the Lord." It has the impress of His Spirit. Never book spoke like that book. It gives strength to the weak, food to the hungry, comfort to the afflicted. It is proved to be true by hundreds of prophecies fulfilled. Thousands of martyrs have died for it. Ten thousand living witnesses will tell you they have proved its power to cheer and support, to counsel and guide: they have no more doubt of it than that there is a sun which warms them. There is no mistaking; this is the book of God. Reader, you have often heard this voice. Have you believed and obeyed? heaven or hell hangs on this.

He speaks *by the gift of His Son.* No voice so sweet, so tender, so persuasive, so solemn, so full of penetrating love as this. If when you were in difficulty and debt, a rich friend were, without saying a word to you, to pay it all off and put a large sum to your account at the bank, would you say, because he did not speak to you personally, you were not called upon to thank and love him? Nay, would you not exclaim, "Here, at least, is a loud call for grateful affection?" Reader, your debt to God is compared in Scripture to ten thousand talents.[1] A sum so vast you could never hope to pay; nay, with your utmost striving to do so, it would increase every day and hour you live. Jesus, by dying for you, paid the whole with His precious blood:[2] He has redeemed or bought you back again; that is, you deserved eternal death, and He died for you, that you might live for ever. Only believe in Him, and you will find the whole debt cancelled; and He will be to you a never-failing treasury of good. Oh! this is greater love, infinitely greater than any earthly friend could show. Do you hear no voice from Bethlehem, from Gethsemane, from Calvary? Hearken to the declaration of the Bible: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."[3]

Reader, God speaks to you *by this tract.* It may be for the last time: "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee."[4] "Flee from the wrath to come."[5] "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."[6]

[1] Matt. xviii. 24.
[2] 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.
[3] John iii. 16.
[4] Gen. xix. 17.
[5] Matt. iii. 7.
[6] Acts xvi. 31.

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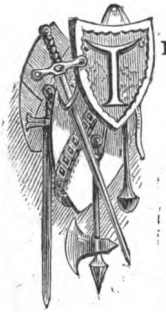
# Great Sinners and Great Saints.



SUDDENLY THERE SHINED ROUND ABOUT HIM A LIGHT FROM HEAVEN!

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# Great Sinners and Great Saints.



The apostle Paul speaks of himself in a well-known passage[1] as the "chief" of sinners, and as a pattern of God's long-suffering or patience towards sinners. As a youth, there was much about him in which the world could see nothing to be disapproved. While other young men were indulging in scenes of pleasure, he was sitting at the feet of Gamaliel, studying the Divine law. But he was all the while drinking in a spirit of pride and self-righteousness, which is most hateful to Him whose pleasure is with the humble and contrite.

The fruit of that spirit manifested itself in the leading part which he took in the stoning of the martyr Stephen, and in the commission which he sought and obtained to persecute to the death the disciples of Christ at Damascus.

In the manner of Saul's conversion on his way to Damascus, we have a "pattern" of *the way in which God often arrests men in their ungodliness.* With equal suddenness and decisiveness are men often still arrested by Divine grace. While eagerly pursuing some sinful object they are stopped by a power which they soon learn to recognise as Divine. And in such cases as these God is "found of them that sought Him not."

In Saul we have likewise a pattern of *the strength of converting grace, and of the riches of pardoning mercy.* His self-righteousness, his spiritual pride, and his hatred to the name of Jesus, presented hindrances to his reception of the gospel which nothing but mighty grace could overcome or remove; while the guilt he contracted was such as could be pardoned only by rich and sovereign mercy.

We may add, that in Saul we have a pattern of *the high and holy character which grace can produce in the chief of sinners.* The sculptor displays genius and skill when he cuts the shapeless block into a form of perfect symmetry. But this change is as nothing to the change which was wrought in Saul of Tarsus, when, through the mighty power of God's Spirit, the chief of sinners became the chief of saints.

In the year 1836 the author of that useful little book, "The Sinner's Friend," gave the following account of himself:—"In the town where I reside were twelve young men who were accustomed, early in life, to meet together for indulgence in drinking and all manner of excess. In the course of time some of them engaged in business, but their habits of sin were so entwined with their very existence, that they became bankrupts. Eight of

[1] 1 Tim. i. 15, 16.

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them died under the age of forty, without a hope beyond the grave; three others were reduced to the most abject poverty.

"One more, the last of the twelve, the worst of all, remains to be accounted for. He was a sort of ringleader, taking the head of the table at convivial parties, and sitting up whole nights drinking, and inducing others to do the same, never going to bed sober. He was an infidel, a disciple of Tom Paine, both in principle and practice; a blasphemer of the word of God; yet a good-natured man, and would do anybody a kindness. At length he went to reside at a distance, where, for a time, he refrained from dissipation, was married, and everything seemed prosperous around him; but, instead of being thankful to God for his mercy, and watching against his besetting sin, he gave way to his old propensity, and brought misery to his family and friends.

"One dark night, being in the neighbourhood of Stourbridge, he had been drinking to excess, and, in a state of intoxication, he wandered out of the house, and staggered amongst the coal-pits, which are in many places left open and exposed. These he passed in safety; but the road he took went over a canal: he missed the bridge, and rolled over the bank to the edge of the water. And here he seemed to have arrived at the end of his wicked course; but God, who is rich in mercy, had caused a stone to lie directly in his path, and thus spared him in this the apparently last hour of his mortal existence. One turn more, and he would have sunk into eternal ruin. The arm of mercy, however, interposed; his senses returned for a moment—he saw the water beneath him—he crawled back again into the road; there he was picked up, and lodged in a public-house for the night.

"This miraculous escape, it might have been thought, would have made a deep and lasting impression on his mind; but no, it was viewed simply as a lucky escape, and he continued to pursue his career of sin as ardently as before.

"After an indulgence in drinking for some days, having come to his senses, he began to reason with himself upon his guilt and folly, and in an angry, passionate manner he muttered, 'Oh, it's no use for me to repent; my sins are too great to be forgiven.' He had no sooner uttered these words than it seemed as if a voice said, with strong emphasis, 'IF THOU WILT FORSAKE THY SINS THEY SHALL BE FORGIVEN.' The poor man started at what he believed to be a real sound, and hastily turned round; but seeing no one, he said to himself, 'Surely I have been drinking till I am going mad.' He stood paralysed, not knowing what to think, till relieved by a flood of tears, and then exclaimed, 'Surely this is the voice of mercy, once more calling me to repentance.' He fell on his knees, and, half suffocated by his feelings, cried out, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' The poor wretch was broken-hearted; and now his besetting sin appeared more horrible than ever: but *it must be conquered, or he must perish.*

"He now began to search the Bible, which he had once despised. Here he saw that crimson and scarlet sins could be blotted out, and the sinner made white as snow—that the grace of God was all-sufficient. He refrained from intem-

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perance, commenced family prayer, and hope again revived."

But the foe was not yet subdued. Again and again it gained the mastery. On one occasion the razor was in the drunkard's hand, to take his own life; "but the Spirit of the Lord interposed, and the weapon fell to the ground." On another occasion death appeared to be very near. "Not a moment was to be lost; he cast himself once more at the footstool of his long-insulted Creator, and with an intensity of agony cried out, 'What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise Thee? shall it declare Thy truth? Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me: Lord, be Thou my helper.' He sank down exhausted; he could say no more. That prayer was heard, and it seemed as if a voice from heaven replied, 'I WILL *help thee;* I have seen thy struggles, and I will now say to thine enemy, Hitherto hast thou come, but no further.'"

For four-and-forty years Mr. Vine Hall lived to attest, by a life of eminent holiness and virtue, the thoroughness of the change which he now underwent. All that period he never tasted intoxicating drink. He was indeed a living "epistle of Christ, known and read of all men." Whenever he spoke of himself it was only to "magnify the Lord," saying with the apostle, "By the grace of God I am what I am." A few days before his death he said to his son, "Preach about Christ and His salvation. I've proved it. It's not less valuable after forty years. Better than ever. I've proved it."

It would be a great mistake to infer, from such histories as these, that it is in any sense desirable that a man should first run into great wickedness before he enters on the Christian life, or that a man is likely to be holy after conversion in the degree in which he was unholy before. But this is very evident, that the most desperate sinner is not beyond the reach of Divine grace and mercy.

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."[1] "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?"[2]

[1] Isaiah iv. 7. [2] Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

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# RETURN!



"FATHER, I HAVE SINNED AGAINST HEAVEN AND BEFORE THEE!"

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# RETURN!

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."—*Luke* xv. 18, 19.

RETURN unto Me, and I will return unto you." "Let the unrighteous man *return* unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him."[1] How often does this direction to return occur in the Bible! There must surely be a meaning in it, and that of great importance.

*Return!* What does this word imply? If a man is travelling in pursuit of some particular object, but, in order to reach it, must turn back and set out in an opposite direction, nothing is more certain than that he has hitherto taken a wrong road. Such, then, is the condition of all to whom these words are addressed. In whatever way they may be wandering, they are alike departing from God, from happiness, from heaven; or else they would not be called upon to *return*.

Now, it requires no argument to prove that this is the case with those who are walking, wilfully and without shame, in the way of transgressors. That such persons must *return* if ever they take hold of the path of life, conscience will declare, if allowed to speak, as well as the word of God.

[1] Mal. iii. 7; Jer. iii. 22; Isa. lv. 7.

But if you have not taken such a course as this, are you sure that you are in the right way, and that there is no necessity for *you* likewise to return. Who is it that has twice expressly declared, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death?"[1] And again, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord pondereth the heart?"[2] You need not think this an unnecessary inquiry; for one who did indeed walk in the way of God's testimonies was so anxious about it, that he prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."[3]

Ask yourself, then, what it is that, from one end of the week to the other, is the *first* object of your thoughts, wishes, and pursuit? If, after all, it be only something connected with the present world; and if for this, however lawful in itself, you are neglecting prayer, the study of the Bible, the means of grace, the welfare of your soul; be sure of this, you are not fulfilling the direction of our Lord, "Seek ye *first* the kingdom

[1] Prov. xiv. 12; xvi. 25. [2] Prov. xxi. 2.
[3] Psa. cxxxix. 23, 24.

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of God, and His righteousness."[1] You are seeking happiness in that which is created, where you will never find it; you are forsaking the Creator—"the fountain of living waters," in whom you would be sure to find it; you are not seeking your way to Zion, that is to heaven, with your face thitherward. The way you are in may seem very different from the "path of the ungodly" and the "way of the wicked," but it will incline more and more towards it, till it lead you at last to have your portion with the unbelievers. You too are in a wrong way; you must *return*.

Again: are you hoping, and in some measure seeking, to please God, but still not in the manner He has appointed; endeavouring, for instance, to recommend yourself to His favour on the ground of your own obedience—not, it may be, exclusively, but trusting that your deficiencies will be made up by the atonement of Jesus Christ—so that you hope your repentance and performance of the duties of religion will be accepted, as some express themselves, for His sake; and that when you have done the best you can, your sincere though imperfect obedience will be rewarded with eternal life, through Him? This is a way in which many walk; but under whatever deceitful appearance it may invite our steps, it must be a wrong one, for it is directly opposed to the teaching of Him who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."[2] There is but one way which leads into the holiest of all,[3] to God Himself, and that is "the new and living way" which is opened up to us through the sufferings and death of "the Lord our righteousness." Nothing but a righteousness absolutely perfect can justify us before the throne of God; and unless we are simply depending on Christ as our only and all-sufficient Saviour, we do not believe upon Him at all, in the Scripture sense of the term. And there is no *middle* way. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth upon him."[1]

If you have never experienced that change of heart which the Bible declares to be necessary, whatever light may have shone upon you from without, you are not, you cannot be, in the right way; for that is the way of filial fear and love toward God as to the heart, as well as of holy obedience in the life. Yours may *seem*, more than any, both to yourselves and to others, to be the right way; but oh! it is the most fearful of all—it is the way of the hypocrite; and what is his hope when God taketh away his soul.[2]

See, then, "that ye refuse not Him that speaketh." Lo! a voice comes from heaven; God Himself condescends to address His wandering, guilty creatures. He addresses you. It is not, however, as it might have been, in anger, and wrath, and fiery indignation. It is not as it might have been, simply to utter the dreadful sentence, "Depart from Me for ever." No! far otherwise. It is a word of pity and long-suffering, loving-kindness and tender mercy.

RETURN! Your sins are more in number than you are ready to imagine, their aggravations are far greater than

[1] Matt. vi. 33. [2] John xiv. 6. [3] See Heb. x. 19, 20.

[1] John iii. 36. [2] Job xxvii. 8.

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you think they are, they deserve everlasting punishment; yet there is hope; "only acknowledge thine iniquity." "Let the wicked *forsake his way*, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him *return* unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."[1]

RETURN! for I have found a ransom, through the atonement of My beloved Son, who died that you might live; I will "blot out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: *return* unto Me, for I have redeemed thee."[2]

RETURN unto Me, and I will return unto you in loving-kindness, and in faithfulness, and in tender mercies. I will yet bestow upon you all the blessings of My love; for I will be your God, and ye shall be My people, when ye *return* unto Me with your whole heart.[3]

RETURN! and you shall be guided by a right way, far different from that in which you have been hitherto, to that blessedness for which man was at first created, and which shall satisfy to the utmost every desire of your renewed soul. For "the ransomed of the Lord shall *return*, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."[4]

Oh! what a blessed turning point in life it is, when this gracious invitation is heartily accepted and complied with. This is indeed *conversion*—a turning "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God"—a turning from self, and vanity, and sin, "to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come."[1]

Reader! can you withstand such Divine compassion and loving-kindness? Are you not ready at once to say—for be assured you cannot return in your own strength—"Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned; for Thou art the Lord my God."[2]

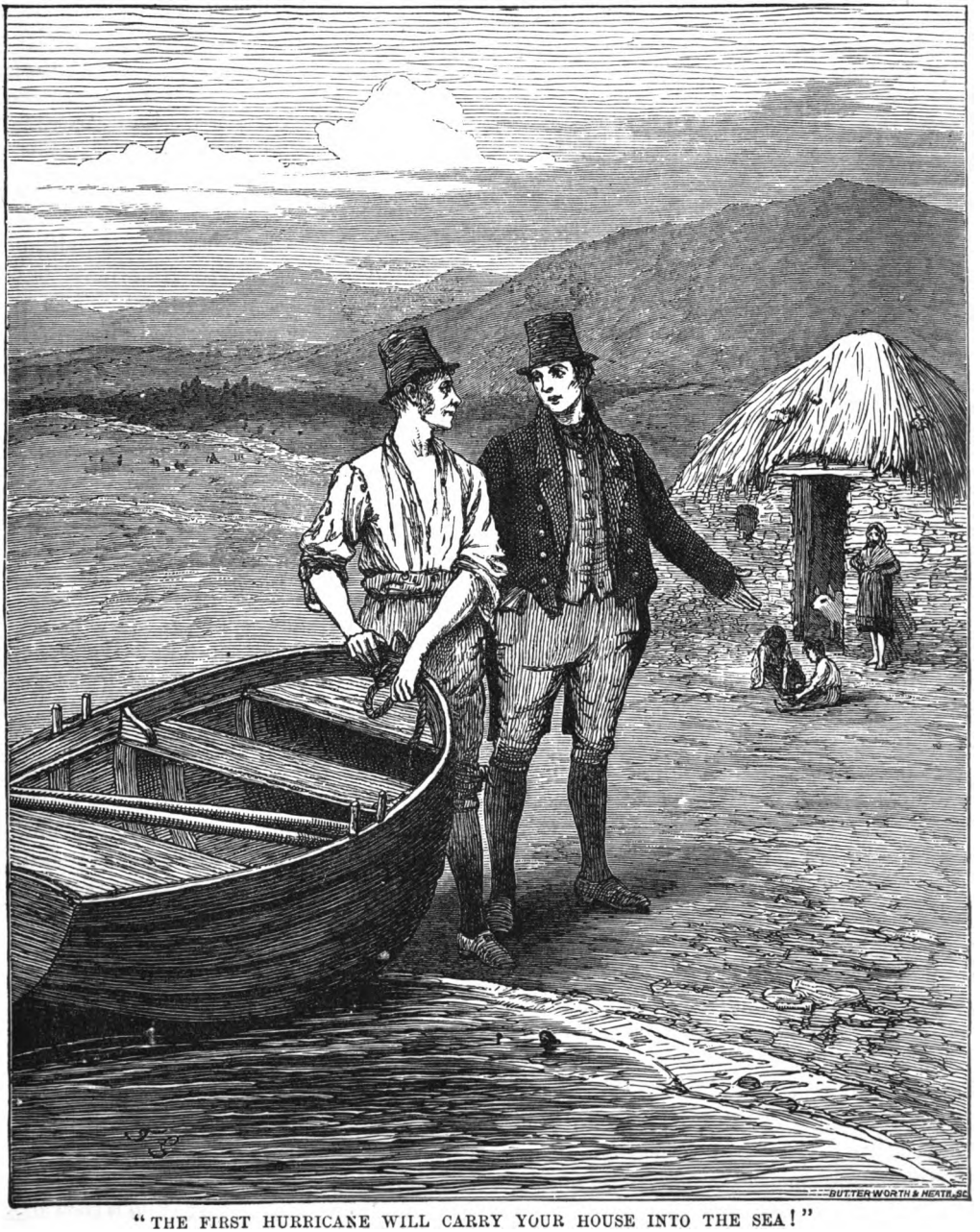
If you are still determined not to return unto the Lord according to His gracious invitation, then there is but one message more for you, and that you will find in the 4th chapter of the prophecy of Amos. God is there represented as speaking to His people by His providence as well as His word; but it is added, "Yet have ye *returned not* unto Me, saith the Lord." He speaks again, and again, and again; and after every time it is added, "Yet have ye returned not unto Me, saith the Lord." What then follows? The Divine declaration and the Divine punishment: "Therefore, thus will I do unto thee; and because I will do this unto thee, PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD!"

[1] Isa. lv. 7. [2] Isa. xliv. 22. [3] Jer. xxiv. 7. [4] Isa. xxxv. 10.

[1] 1 Thess. i. 10. [2] Jer. xxxi. 18–20.

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# THE HOUSE ON THE SAND.




"THE FIRST HURRICANE WILL CARRY YOUR HOUSE INTO THE SEA!"

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# The House on the Sand.

"Every one," said Christ, "that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."[1] Perhaps you may think, "Well, the people in those far countries may have odd ways of doing things, but we should never build a house without laying a firm foundation, to stand the storms." And yet the circumstances mentioned in the following story actually took place not very many years ago.

A poor family in Ireland, of the name of Sloane, were compelled to leave the little farm they had held, because they could not pay their rent; and they found themselves without a place to go to. They were respectable people, but hard times had come upon them, and they were quite broken down by the famine. They got behind with the landlord, and there was no help for them; they had to quit. Mickey Sloane was a weaver, but he had been forced to sell his loom to buy meal; so he, with his wife and two small children, had nothing to do, and no home.

Poor Mick was sadly put to it to find a shelter for those who were trusting to him. He would have gone to America; but who would pay his passage-money? So, after turning the matter over in his mind, he bethought him of a small strip of land on the shore, right under a sand bank. This spot had never been cultivated, for though the grass had grown over it there was nothing but sand underneath. However, as Mick got it for next to nothing, he had a mind to put him up a shelter there. So he collected some stones and wood, and set to work in right earnest; and in a very short time he had a house, such as it was. "But anyhow," said Mick, "it will keep my Mary and the little ones from the cold and the wet, and we'll not be beholden to the landlord."

Now Mick never so much as thought of the foundation. If he had he never would have placed his house where he did; but he just set up his four walls upon the sand, and roofed them in, and thought it would serve his turn well enough.

"Morrow to ye, Mick," said a neighbour to him the day after he had come to live on the shore; "this is but a poor place I see you in; and I'm thinking that the first hurricane that gets up will carry your house into the sea. Besides, you see, this sand is queer and shifting; I wish you had built somewhere on firmer ground, for I'm afraid that ye'll come to grief." "Och, no, Pat!" said Mick, "ye'll see that

[1] Matt. vii. 26, 27.

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the house will stand my time, and serve my turn till God sends me a better; and may be the times may mend, and I may get up in the world again. And then you see, its handy for me being so near the boats, and I can get out and fish."

Well, sure enough, the house did stand for a good while, and Mick and his family lived in it for about a year; and doubtless many a time he looked at it with pride and pleasure as he was coming in to the shore in the boat, and thought it looked right well and snug under the bank, with the Morne mountains behind it. Little did he think that one day his shelter would deceive him, and fall when he most needed it.

But the winter set in very severe; storms swept along the Irish coast, and the whistling winds might have warned Mick to look to his house, and see if it would stand the blast. But he never gave it a thought. He felt quite safe, and it would have been all a waste of words to try to show him his danger.

This winter Mickey thought the times were really going to mend with him, for his father-in-law sent him a hundred of meal and a loom. His joy was great at getting the loom, for he thought now they would surely get work and be well to do again.

But a very short time after Mickey got the loom, there came a fearful storm. It set in just at night; the wind howled, and the sea dashed and foamed against the rocks, and the rain fell in torrents. But Mick and his family lay down quietly to rest, never dreaming of evil; and most likely they were very glad to have a roof over their heads on such a fearful night.

Death comes like a thief; for while they were all asleep the rain so loosened the sand around and under the house that it gave way, and the frail shelter fell upon Mick, and his wife and children, and buried them under its ruins. It is likely that poor Mick had some notion of his danger when it was too late, for his body was found sitting up, as if he had meant to try and save himself. Perhaps if he had a moment to think, he blamed himself for not giving heed to those that knew better than he, and wished that he had not built his house upon the sand.

Now, dear reader, doubtless you feel sorry for this poor man, and think that he was very foolish to do as he did; but are you quite sure that you are not acting in the same way yourself? Do you wonder what we mean? We will explain it to you. You must one day die; your body will be laid in the grave, but your soul will then be either happy or miserable. Now which do you wish to be? No doubt you will say that you wish and hope to go to heaven. But what reason have you to expect that you will do so? Have you any good ground for such a hope? for if not, you are building your house upon the sand, and at the day of your death when you most want comfort it will fail you, just as Mickey Sloane's foundation failed, and his house fell on the stormy night when he most needed a shelter, and buried him in its ruins.

If Mickey had acted wisely, he would have dug deep till he came to some firm ground, or may be to a rock, and then he would have had something solid for his walls to rest on, and his house would have stood so firmly that the rain might have

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descended and the floods come, and the winds have blown, and it would not have fallen.

Now, we hope you will act wisely about the salvation of your soul: do not build on sand. Remember the words of the apostle Paul: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ;" and again, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Jesus Christ is the rock you are to build on, and if you trust to anything else you will find it deceive you. You may think all looks very fair and right; but mind, you have not yet met with the wind, and the rain, and the floods. Mickey Sloane thought his house looked all right, and because it stood in fair weather he thought it would resist the storm; but it did not. And so you may get on very well as long as you are in health and prosperity; but when the storm comes, that is, sickness and death, will you not find that you have trusted to what will deceive you? Like the sand it will slip away from beneath you, and nothing will be left to rest on. Jesus Christ has plainly told us what we must do to be saved; He says in effect, "Believe on *Me*, and thou shalt be saved." That is the only way. He came into this world to die for our sins, to the end "that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He says, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." If you feel that you are a great sinner, unable to save yourself, and if you come to the Lord Jesus to save your soul from death, He will do it. He died for this very purpose, that all who come to Him should be saved from their sins.

But you must trust to Jesus *alone*. You must not fancy that any good works of your own, or of any other person, will save you, or will help to save you. That would be building on sand. Nothing but the rock is a sure foundation, and that rock is Jesus Christ; and He is both able and willing to save you.

But there is yet another lesson to be learned, and it is this: If Mick had *known for certain* that his house would fall on one particular day, he would have taken care to have been clear of it before that time; but, you see, he did not believe it would fall, and it came down in the night, just when he thought he was most secure. So, friend, do not you think that you will go to Jesus some day or other before you die? How can you tell when that will be? Just go to Him *now*, and pray to Him to save you, a great sinner, from your sins, and give you the Holy Spirit to teach, sanctify, and comfort you. Trust only in Christ for salvation; and then whenever your earthly house falls, that is, whenever your body dies, you will have a house in heaven secure and firm.

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# What can Man Do?



THEY ESCAPED ALL SAFE TO LAND.

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# What can Man Do?



This question is sometimes put to those who offer to a sinner that best of all advice, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."[1] It is argued, "If God knew all things before He made me, He knew whether I should be religious or not, and whichever He knew I should be, I am sure to become: *What can man do?*"

Now, reader, look at the history of Paul's shipwreck, related in the 27th chapter of the Acts, and particularly at the 22nd and 31st verses: "And now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." Of course, God's foreknowledge is as real and as influential in one event as in another, in a great one as well as in a small one, in the salvation of a soul from hell, as in the deliverance of the body from death. An angel from God stood before the apostle Paul in the night time, during a dreadful storm at sea,[2] telling him that he should be saved from drowning, and all those who sailed with him. This showed the foreknowledge, the will, and purpose of God. This was just as unchangeable as any decree, under which you try to justify your thoughtlessness or your unbelief. Paul was to be spared; all the crew were to be spared with him. How did the apostle act after he had heard these good tidings, and told them to the ship's company? Did he allow every man to leave his post in the vessel? Did he tell them that the purpose of God rendered the labours of men quite unnecessary? You would very likely have said in such a case, "What can a sailor do?" But the apostle neither rested himself, nor allowed the sailors to rest. They were forsaking the ship, as though they thought it impossible that they should be preserved where they were. But this Paul would not allow. They were to be saved; but it was to be by doing their duty, and in the use of the appointed means: "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved."

How was this? They were all to be saved; and yet, unless they remained at work in the vessel, they could not be saved! What does this show, but that the Divine purpose was to be accomplished through man's efforts? They were not to be idle because God had promised to be merciful. They were to receive the mercy through their own exertions, under the overruling providence of God; and yet how likely it is

[1] Acts xvi. 31. [2] Acts xxvii. 23.

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that many of our readers would have asked in astonishment, if the apostle Paul had told them to remain in the ship, "*What can man do?*"

Reader! are you among those who try to cast upon God the blame of their impenitence here, and their punishment hereafter? The principle implied in the case of the shipwreck of the apostle Paul is to be found as well in spiritual as temporal things. God excites to effort by His promise, and uses the effort to produce a good result. Do, in temporal things, the same thing that you are doing in spiritual things, and where would your body be? God knew just as much about your body, before the foundation of the world, as he knew about your soul; knew whether it would live and flourish in health, by the food you would eat, or whether it would languish and die, through starvation and want. "*What can man do?*" If you are to live, you will be fed; if you are to die, you will be starved.

Why not wait, then, to see what God has determined, by seeing what God does? You dare not do this. You have not the courage to risk *the body* by presumptuous idleness; then, why risk *the soul?* Is not your difficulty just as great about "the meat which perisheth," as about "that which endureth unto everlasting life?" Again, in serious illness, do you say, "*What can man do?*" and refuse to send for a physician? No, you wisely use the best means within your reach, though sensible that God could restore you to health without them if he saw fit. This is practical wisdom. When Isaiah was commissioned of God to assure king Hezekiah of his recovery, he did not neglect outward means, for he said, "Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered."[1] Then why go on thinking, and planning, and working for the body, whilst you never think, never plan, never work, never pray, for the soul? Until you let God's will, and God's purposes, keep you from striving after temporal things, you are wickedly unreasonable in pretending that God's purposes stand in the way of your seeking those which are eternal.

But now, sinner, think for a moment; is it not *pretence*, after all? Are you not endeavouring to *get rid of the sacrifices so called, and the self-denial which religion brings with it*, when you thus pervert the doctrine of God's decrees? Very few neglect their salvation, without giving some reason or other for their neglect; and if they can only puzzle one of God's servants with a little smattering of their own theology, they find their consciences easier for a time. Reader! is not this the spirit in which you say, "WHAT CAN MAN DO?"

But consider this question solemnly, and as though you were on your deathbed; *Are you prepared to make this excuse to* God? Will you say to God, "What could I do?" Do you not feel *now* that you *can* do something; and will you not feel, when you stand at the judgment-seat of Christ, that you *could have done something once?* Do you not feel *now*, and will you not acknowledge *then*, that God is just as willing to give you

[1] 2 Kings xx. 7.

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help by His Holy Spirit, that you may "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," as He is to give you all needful earthly good? Then why endeavour to deceive yourself and others with so hollow an excuse? Does God command you to "repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out?"[1] then, in His strength, and in obedience to His command, set about the work at once. Depend on God's own promise, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out;" leave everything else to Him. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."[2]

A poor man, whose mind was once perplexed with this very question, at length dreamed a dream, which seemed to explain to him what saving faith is. He thus related it to a Christian minister, since dead.

"I thought," said he, "that I stood in some desolate spot, on the very edge of a steep cliff: below, at a great depth, the sea was dashing violently against the bottom of the cliff. I stood with only half a footing on the edge, when, in a moment, something, I knew not what, whirled me over the precipice, and I felt myself falling and falling downwards into the ocean beneath; but suddenly (how, I cannot tell) I thought I caught hold of a crag in the sides of the cliff, as I was falling past it, and there I hung, with one hand grasping a small piece of rock. I hung a few seconds, and then I felt that the crag was crumbling in my fingers, or breaking away from the side.

What was I to do? The next second I must fall, and be dashed to atoms. All at once, I turned and looked behind me, and I saw a figure, dressed in pure white, coming towards me, and walking on the water. He came nearer, and nearer, until he stood just underneath where I was hanging; and although the distance downward was great, yet I thought I could see the expression of his countenance, that it was a kind and a gentle one; I could even see that our eyes met, and instantly I heard him whisper softly upward to me, 'Let go, let go.' I let go, and fell into his arms, and was saved."

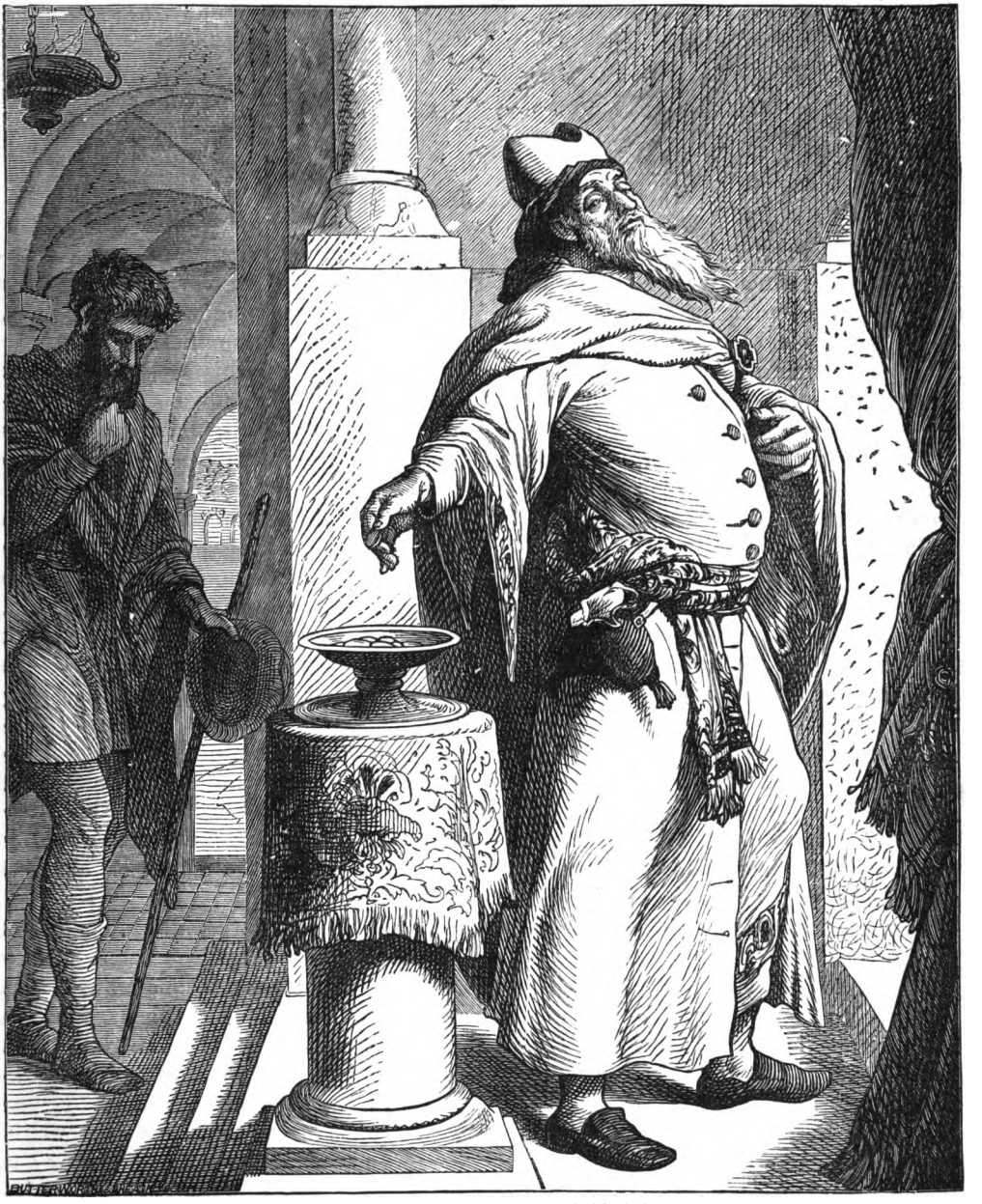
The poor man understood his dream thus: the crag was self-righteousness, and every false refuge that crumbles in the grasp of the sinner; He who came walking to him on the water was Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and the words, "Let go," were the same as the words, "Give up all else and believe in Me." Faith is the letting go of all other dependence, and falling into the arms of Christ.

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm
On Thy kind arms I fall;
Be Thou my strength and righteousness,
My Saviour and my all."

[1] Acts iii. 19. [2] Acts xvi. 31.

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# "Thou God seest Me."



THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

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# "Thou God seest Me."

Gen. xvi. 13.



These are four short words which may easily be read by a poor scholar, and be learned by heart without much difficulty; yet they contain a great and important truth, which all are too apt practically to forget, namely, that God is "in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

This is a consideration which fills the minds of "the good" with joy; but to "the evil" it may well be a subject of terror and alarm. These willingly banish it from their thoughts, or, if it will intrude, try sometimes to flatter themselves that God in heaven is far too great and too much occupied to notice all that is done upon earth; that their thoughts, and words, and actions are insignificant and escape observation, whilst He is carrying on the great concerns of the universe. But this is a dangerous delusion. The Holy Scriptures in many places assure us plainly that "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."[1] David, in the 139th Psalm, appeals to the Most High, and says, "O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether."[1]

[1] Heb. iv. 13.

Let us see how this great truth, that God sees us, bears upon different characters and their circumstances in this life; and especially as regards the life to come.

You doubtless must have forgotten that God was looking on, when you gave way to that fit of angry passion because your will was opposed by a wise parent, or because your companion would not consent to do as you wished; or when you told a falsehood to conceal something you had done which you knew to be wrong, hoping the truth would never be discovered. If you had in either of these cases called to mind the little sentence, "Thou God seest me," would it not have calmed the anger, or checked the lie?

You also forgot the all-seeing eye of God when you went to the haunt of folly and vice, and made acquaintance with those whom your teachers and best friends had urged you to shun; who delight in deeds which they hide from the knowledge of the good and virtuous. If you foolishly thought that darkness would cover you, know that "the darkness and

[1] Psalm cxxxix. 1–3.

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the light are both alike to God;" that He, the Holy One and the Just, was looking on; and that all you did or said stands recorded in the book which is to be opened against unpardoned sinners at the last day. Oh that you might never more forget these little words, "Thou God seest me!"

Another remembered only the eye of his employer, and that was not looking on, when he secretly took for his own use some article belonging to his master, or a small sum of money which he thought would not be missed; but God was there, and saw you fall under the power of temptation. If you had recollected at that moment these four words, and the great fact they declare, "Thou God seest me," surely you would have resisted the tempter, and have been saved from taking the first step in what must certainly prove a downward course and end in ruin, unless you hear and obey the gracious call of your justly offended, but still merciful God, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die?"[1]

Another is frequently idle and negligent when not overlooked in his work. This is only another method of secretly robbing a master who pays him for his time. You, too, my friend, forget that God's eye is upon you, beholding each ill-spent moment, and that every secret thing will some day be brought to light. Try to rouse yourself from your slothful habits by the constant remembrance of these words, "Thou God seest me."

Some are harbouring in the inmost recesses of their minds revengeful and malicious thoughts, angry tempers, or impure imaginations, which as yet have not broken out into open sin, and therefore appear to them harmless, and excite no apprehension.—But God's eye sees all that is within, as well as without a man; and can you stand His scrutiny, and not feel guilty before Him? Can you look up to Him with confidence and say, "Thou God seest me?"

Many, many there are, young and old, rich and poor, who constantly attend the house of God, and to the eyes of their fellow-creatures are not only decent but devout worshippers, while their minds and hearts are not with God, but are filled with thoughts and feelings of earth and sin. Alas! they forget that "the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."[1] Would it not give solemnity and seriousness to your minds to think of these words, "Thou God seest me?"

But this great and holy God sees and knows not only our thoughts, and words, and doings, which are sinful and therefore hateful to Him, but He sees also *the first sincere and earnest desire that arises in the mind of the sinner for pardon.*

When the publican of old went into the temple and smote upon his breast in the anguish of his heart, and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" he did not call in vain, for God was there. And when you, my reader, enter into your secret chamber, and close the door that no living eye may behold you, and there shed the tear of penitence, and kneeling in humble prayer plead, for the sake of Christ, for the forgiveness of all your

[1] Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

[1] 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

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sins, and the gift of a new heart and a right spirit, then God is there too, and casts on you an eye of compassion and love.

The distressed and the suffering are not lost sight of by the God of compassion and love; and often when they, perhaps, have forgotten that He sees them, He brings them help.

The poor distressed woman, Hagar, who first uttered the words, "Thou God seest me," was cast out from her home, and exiled from those she loved: faint and weary, suffering from the want of food and shelter, she knew not whither she should go, but sat down "by a fountain of water in the wilderness." But God saw her, and heard her affliction, and soon appeared for her help, "And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, 'Thou God seest me.'"

And so it is with the Christian. When bowed down with grief and suffering from the trials to which all are more or less exposed in their passage through life, and perhaps destitute of earthly help, he looks up to his heavenly Friend and says to Him, "Thou God seest me;" and the remembrance sustains him, and inspires with hope and peace. He hears a voice in return whispering to his soul, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,"[1] and thus gains strength to do or suffer all the will of God. Thus, if these words were deeply impressed on the mind, they would, by the grace of God, be the means of deterring from sin, exciting to duty, and imparting comfort in trouble.

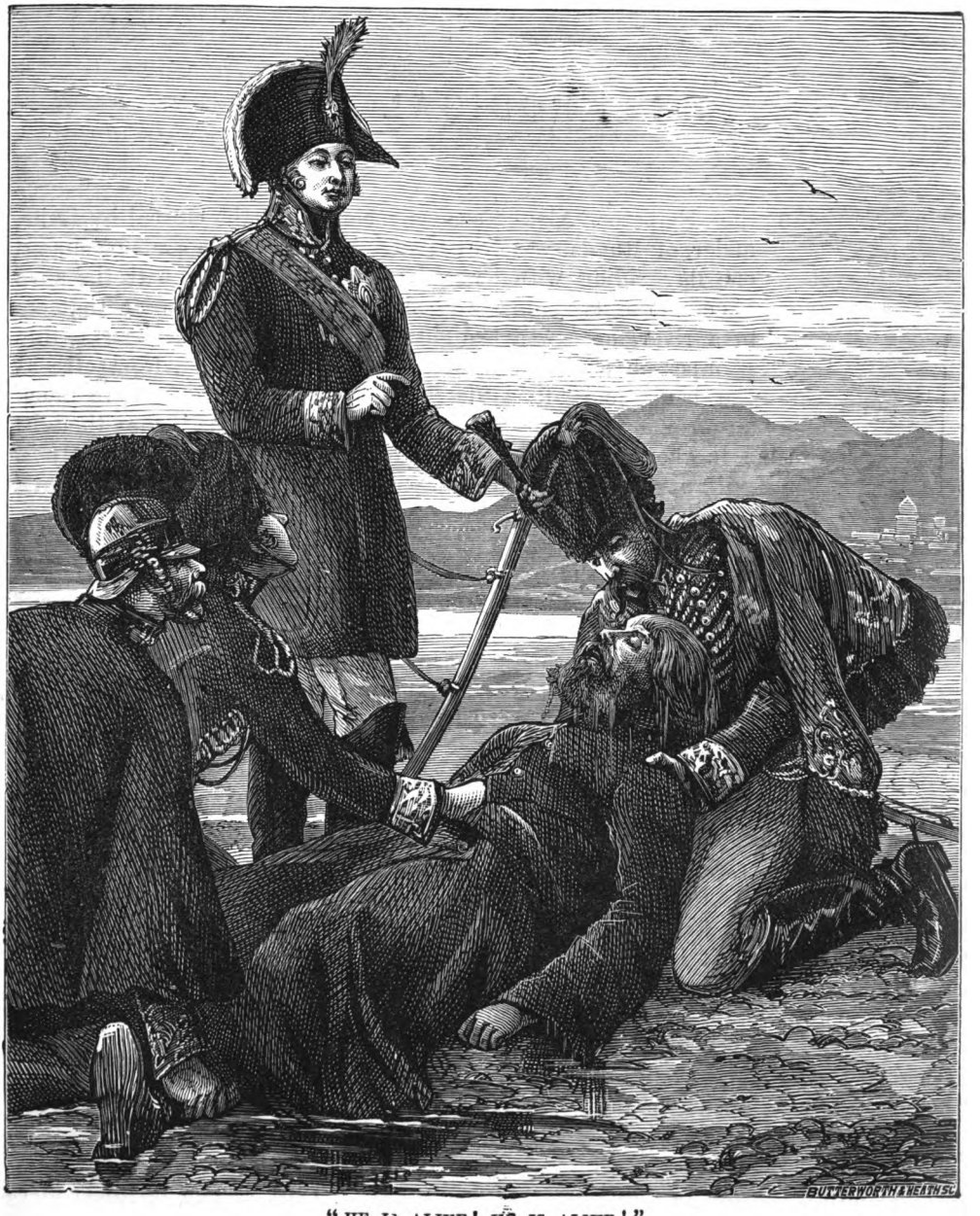
But God in infinite mercy has taught us in the Bible how we may escape the condemnation we deserve, and be prepared to meet Him without dread, even with a joyful hope of living for ever with Him. There we are told, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."[1] This Son, the Lord Jesus Christ in our nature, was subject to all the troubles and sorrows of humanity, and fulfilled the holy law of God. He lived a life of righteousness Himself, and by His sufferings and death upon the cross, He bore the wrath due to our sins, enduring the punishment we so justly had deserved. For His sake, God is willing to pardon the sinner who comes to Him, believing in Christ as his complete Saviour, to wash away his guilt, and by the Holy Spirit to take away from him the love of sin, and give him a new heart, new hopes, and new desires; and thus justifying and sanctifying him, prepare him to meet God at the hour of death and in the day of judgment without dismay, and to enter into the world of glory, where we shall be permitted to see Him as He is, and to know even as we are known.

[1] Heb. xiii. 5.

[1] John iii. 16.

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# THE PRODIGAL SON.




"HE IS ALIVE! HE IS ALIVE!"

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# The Prodigal Son.

As the Emperor Alexander, of Russia, was one day riding with his escort by the side of a river, he saw a poor peasant slip from the bank, and after struggling a little time in the water, sink and disappear. An attendant of the emperor plunged into the stream, and diving beneath it, brought up the apparently lifeless body, and dragged it to the shore. The efforts made to restore animation were speedily successful, and when the chest began to heave, and the heart to beat again, the monarch cried out in the greatness of his joy, "Oh! he is alive! he is alive!"

We must be cold-hearted if we are not touched when we hear of this instance of pity and benevolence in a royal breast. But how much more deeply should we be affected when we learn from the Holy Scriptures that He who is "King of kings, and Lord of lords," the Great Sovereign "whom known and unknown worlds obey," rejoices with all His attendant angels when even *one* soul is plucked as a brand out of the fire!

When our Lord Jesus Christ was on this earth, He made this truth very plain in the beautiful parable of the prodigal son as recorded in the Gospel by Luke. In His tender love to the souls of men, it was His custom to converse with the most wicked and degraded, in order that He might soften their hard hearts into penitence, and rescue them from eternal death. The proud Pharisees were much displeased at this; and, as if they thought that He was encouraging the ungodly in their wickedness, and was Himself unholy, they said, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Our Lord, however, showed them that His real object was like that of a shepherd who goes out into the wilderness to bring back a stray sheep; like that of a woman who sweeps her house carefully till she has found her lost piece of money, and like that of a loving father who gladly welcomes back to his house and to his heart a long-lost son.

Does this meet the eye of one who has been a prodigal son? You perhaps remember the time when the strictness of a religious home became intolerable. You wished to get away from a place where God and Christ, and religion and eternity, were often spoken of, and where a pious father like Abraham commanded his children and his household after him to walk in the ways of the Lord.[1] And so you resolved to bear this restraint no longer. You would spend your Sundays as you liked; you would keep what

[1] Gen. xviii. 19.

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company you pleased; you would frequent the places of amusement where other gay young people went, and you would have your fill of pleasure. There should be no more moping and melancholy, no more reading of the Bible or going to worship. You would be a slave no longer, you were old enough and wise enough to take care of yourself. You would be your own master.

Then you left home, you went, so to speak, into "a far country," where you were free from all parental and religious restraint. You soon learned, perhaps, to curse and swear; you frequented the haunts of gamblers and drunkards, and "wasted your substance," your time and money and health, "with riotous living;" and, like the prodigal who sold himself to a citizen of the "far country," and who was sent into the field to feed swine, you plunged deeper and deeper into sin, and you became the bond-slave of the devil, giving yourself over "to work all uncleanness with greediness."

Perhaps that is your present condition. Oh! how fallen and debased! What a degrading slavery! What a cruel master is he whom you have hitherto been serving! What misery, too, is yours! The prodigal having spent all, "there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him." Ah! is it thus with you? In ruined health, with a shattered constitution, without money, without employment, without friends, your character blasted, oh, how miserable your condition! How true do you now find the Divine declaration, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

How impressively do we learn from the history of the prodigal, the character of a real penitent, and the true way of returning to God even for the greatest transgressors! True conversion is returning of the soul to God; so the prodigal "came to himself." Every sinner is "beside himself." "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."[1] When a man is under the power of evil passions and sensual appetites, he does not see the difference between good and evil; or if he do so, it is only like the lunatic, when but for a few moments he seems to be rational, but speedily his madness comes on.

Reader! have you come to yourself? Are you convinced that the meanest of God's servants, whom perhaps you once despised, are happy compared with you? Then be encouraged; you are like the prodigal, who, "when he came to himself," said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" Oh! be like him too, in resolving to arise and go to your Father. It will be a joyful day in your history, if while you read these lines you should return to God, confessing your sins and crying for mercy. The blessed Jesus Himself has put a suitable confession into your lips. Will you not make it your own and say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son?"

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 4.

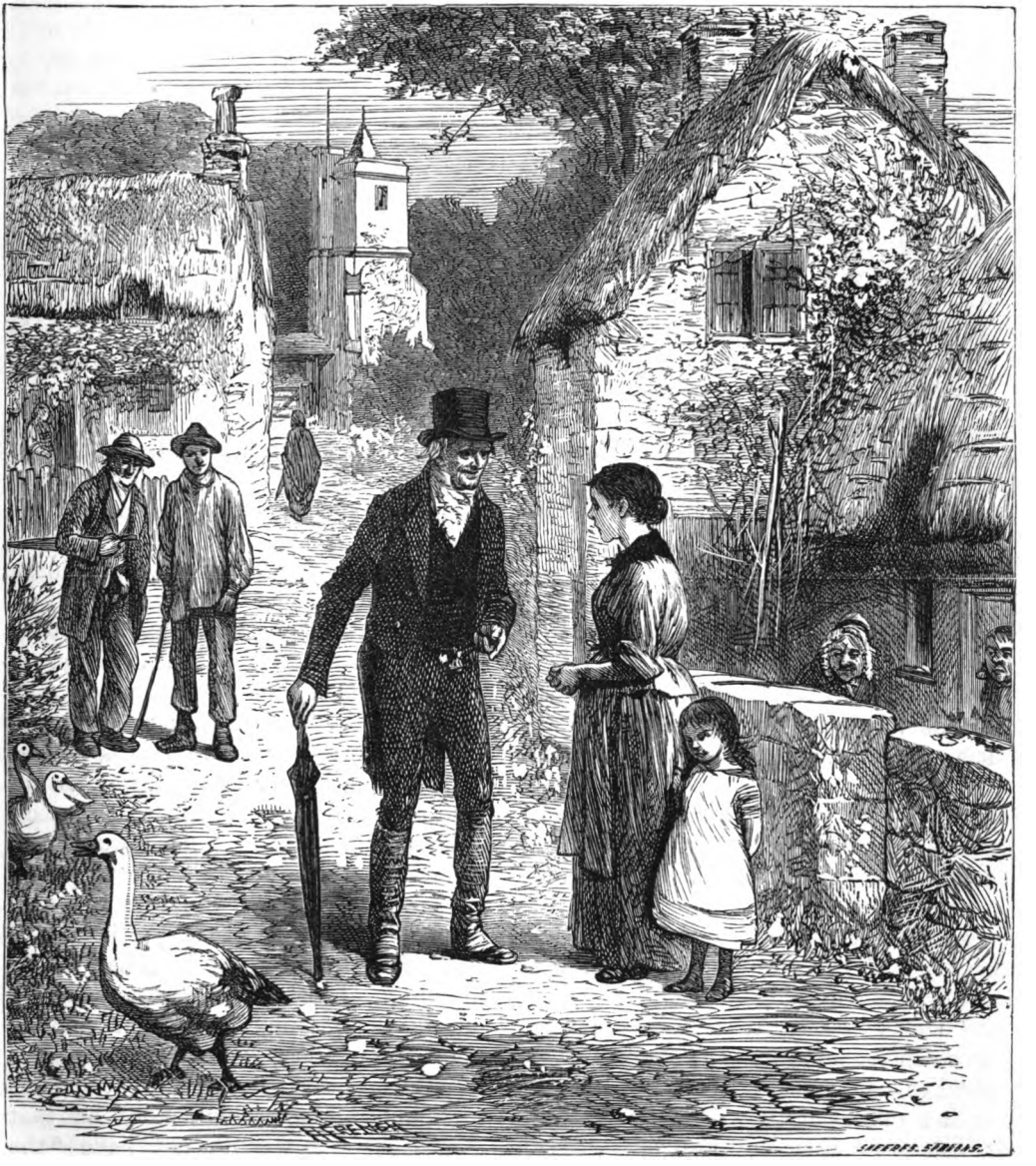
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Perhaps some one is saying, "I acknowledge myself to have acted the part of a madman, as well as that of an ungrateful rebel. But my case is desperate. I have sinned with a high hand, against light and love and warnings. I have resisted the Holy Ghost. There can be no mercy for such a wretch as I am." Now this is the teaching and temptation of your taskmaster Satan. He would like to drive you to despair, in order that you might recklessly plunge again into riotous excess. He desires that you should be like Israel, when he said, "There is no hope." But does the gospel of Jesus Christ, does God's Word, does the history of the prodigal son, say that there is no hope?—Or does it teach you that you dare not go back to God till you have done something to wipe out the stains of your sins, and to make Him willing to receive you? Did the prodigal despair? No! Did he wait till he had tried to make himself better? No! "He arose, and came to his father!" Look at him as he comes. His wasted body is covered with filthy rags, his flesh is torn with thorns, his naked feet are wounded by the sharp stones, his eyes are hollow, his cheeks are wan, he is faint with hunger, he is filled with fear and trembling; will not his father now drive him away with angry frowns and harsh upbraidings from his presence? At all events, he will throw himself at his feet. He says, "If I perish, I perish."

Why should you not do the same to your offended Father? Surely it is worth the trial. At all events it can make your case no worse, perhaps it will relieve you from all your miseries. Perhaps! Nay, certainly it will. For as surely and as lovingly (forgetting all his son's multiplied offences) as the prodigal's father, "when he was yet a great way off,—ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him," so will a God of mercy welcome you. For thus saith the Lord: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will not remember thy sins." Christ Himself declares, "Him that cometh to Me I will in NO WISE CAST OUT." Doctor Doddridge, more than a hundred years ago, said that this one verse had been the means of salvation to thousands. Doubtless since his time, it has, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, encouraged thousands more to take Jesus at His word, and to rejoice in His mercy.

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# "DYING LIKE A LAMB."



"YES, SIR, SHE WENT OFF QUITE LIKE A LAMB."

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# "Dying like a Lamb."



HASTENING up a narrow lane, I stopped in front of a small house and asked a woman, standing in the road, "How is Mrs. Linton? I hope she is not worse. I was at the farther end of the parish when your messenger called, and was not able to come before. How is she?"

"She is gone, sir," replied the woman, much moved: "she died about an hour ago."

"I am truly grieved to hear it," I answered; "I hoped to be in time to see her once more; but it has been ordered otherwise. And how was she at the last? did she suffer much? did she say anything about her trust in the Saviour?"

"Oh, sir! she hardly spoke a word since you were here last night. She slept most part of the time, and only waked once or twice for something to drink, for her mouth was dry, poor thing, and then she dozed off again, and died at the last like a lamb."

"Died like a lamb," I repeated: "you mean she suffered little at the last?"

"Yes, sir, and she died, too, so easy in her mind that a neighbour, who has seen many deaths, said that 'she went off quite like a lamb.'"

"Oh that she may have had a good hope in her death!" I exclaimed.

"She was always a good mother, sir, and never did anybody any harm, and brought up every one of us to our church," said her daughter, as if to silence a doubt which may have appeared through the wish I had just expressed.

I made as fitting a reply as I could to the poor girl, and sitting down in that chamber of death, I spent a few minutes in explaining the way of the sinner's salvation. I spoke of our need of a Saviour, and of the freeness, the fulness, the entire grace of redemption. Then, after a short prayer, I took my departure.

"Died like a lamb!" I repeated to myself, as I walked homeward—"died like a lamb!" The poor woman, who after a short but severe illness had at length gone to her account, was, as her daughter had said, a quiet and respectable woman, who had a good word from all her neighbours. She came to public worship once on the Sunday, and that generally in the evening; indeed I never remember to have seen her in the morning. Her excuse for not coming out in the morning was, that Sunday was the only day when she could sit down comfortably to her dinner, and she always had "something hot" on that day. Why she could not have "the something hot" on the Saturday she

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was never quite able to explain; and her absence from Divine worship evidently arose more from "the want of a will than from the want of a way."

On every point to which I referred, ner apologies and reasons were weak and trifling, showing that her state was far from satisfactory.

It seemed impossible to make any impression upon her. "She knew she ought to spend the morning of the Sabbath better than in cooking her dinner or sitting with her hands before her, for she could not read much, and her Bible lay unopened on the shelf; but then she hoped some day to go twice to the service. And after all, she was no worse than many of her neighbours, and from what she knew, she thought she was as good as many who went twice a day to worship, and who, from what she could see, were no better than herself who went but once."

Thus and thus she would argue and talk; and often have I left her cottage with a sad heart, and with a prayer that God would awaken and arouse her from this state of torpor and of death.

And so time went on, and brought no change. She was always civil, always seemed ready to listen to the word of exhortation, always assented to what was said; and there all ended. She lived on just as before, and no doubt thought that "all was well." Then she was seized with a sharp attack of illness. I went to see her constantly; read, talked to her, prayed with her, and ever, apparently, left her the same as I found her.

She suffered a good deal from a troublesome cough, and from exhaustion, and her bodily ailments were more in her thoughts than her spiritual state in the eye of that God before whom she might be so shortly summoned to appear. Even when I was engaged in directing her mind to the things which belonged to her peace, she would, at a pause on my part, turn the conversation to the sleepless nights she had passed, or to the pain in her side, or to the weariness consequent on being confined so long to bed. All this was disheartening. She never seemed aroused to a sense of her state as a sinner; to her need of pardon; to the "exceeding sinfulness of sin." If words of urgency and earnestness did for a moment awake her to serious thoughts, she never failed to quiet her alarm by saying, "she hoped the Lord would have mercy upon her, for she had always tried to live respectably, and had brought up a large family in honesty."

Poor Mrs. Linton! I do not pronounce upon her state; but if she had no better hope of heaven than one founded on her own quietness and kindness and respectability, she was "feeding on ashes:" a "deceived heart had turned her aside." Yet, alas! thousands live, and thousands die, in a hope as vague and as delusive. They live in false security; they die in false peace. They go down to the grave with "a lie in their right hand." Then carnal ease is unbroken until they have passed into the presence of God, and have found themselves beneath the all-seeing eye of Him who "will not at all acquit the wicked." Then what an awakening to the truth! What an awful termination to their security! They sleep away into eternity, and then—and then—they sleep no more for ever. "Peace, peace," they cry this moment, and the next they are made to realise the fearful

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reality, that "there is no peace to the wicked." They die to all appearance "like a lamb," and you gaze on the calm and passive form and features of the dead, and while you gaze, the spirit that once inhabited that tenement of clay is roused from its apathy, and is in all the horror and agony of conscious existence, and unavailing remorse, and bitter despair.

Oh, reader, thoughtless indifference, whether in life or in death, is no proof that all is well with you. No; far better to be disturbed in your sins, to have your conscience alarmed, to be aroused from your false slumber, than to sleep into eternity only to discover that the possibility of peace is gone for evermore.

There are few things more to be feared than the settling down of the soul in earthly cares, or comforts, from which there is no awakening until it be too late to escape from "the wrath to come." Terrible thought! Then "awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." "Except a man be born again"—let these words sink deep into your heart, let them fix themselves in your mind, let them stir your conscience—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

There is no use in trying to soften down this statement, or to explain it away; it must be believed and received without any reserve. Reader, are you "born again of the Spirit?" Are "old things passed away?" Are "all things become new?" Be not satisfied with putting the consideration of the question off till a more convenient opportunity. Answer it now. You must be converted, or you cannot be saved. Search and see if there be any proof in your heart or in your life, that you have "a good hope through grace." Let there be no self-deception, no cheat upon yourselves. You may live in indifference as to your sin and danger, and you may at last "die like a lamb;" but you will awake to "lift up your eyes in hell, being in torments." Horrible awakening! Will not the very thought of such a doom urge you to "flee for refuge to the hope set before you in the gospel?" Be earnest about your soul. Turn as a penitent sinner to Christ: with all your heart turn to Him. Tell Him all your guilt: hide nothing from Him. He will receive you willingly; will wash you in His own blood; will robe you in His own righteousness; will sanctify you with His own Spirit; and at death will bring you to that bright world where there is "fulness of joy" and "pleasures for evermore."

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# FAIR-WEATHER FAITH.



"WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY FAIR-WEATHER FAITH?"

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# Fair-weather Faith.

"But what did you mean, my dear mother, by telling me to beware of fair-weather faith?"

"I can best answer your question, William, by telling you, as I have never done yet, the facts of my own history.

"Your father and I were married young, and I came full of hope and joy to my neat and pretty home. I had known but little care, and had experienced scarcely any trouble. Brought up in ease, I was also nurtured in love. If my girlish home had been happy, my new abode was delightful. Instructive and pleasant books, tasteful rooms, in which I failed to find a want; a garden filled with summer flowers; agreeable neighbours; and more than all, my kind husband, made my new sphere indeed hopeful and bright. Your father and I were of one mind. We loved God and each other. In leisure hours we went together to visit the sick and needy. We were not rich, but by economy and self-denial we had always something to spare for the poor; and if I was first drawn to your father by the honest manliness of his piety (which I thank God I had been taught to value before all other excellence), I was the more satisfied with my choice the longer I lived with him, and the more closely I observed him. So years passed, and, to increase our happiness, we had children. We were still blessed with competence; for with our needs our means steadily increased, so that 'enough and to spare' was still our thankful experience. Had we then expressed our feelings, no words would have been so appropriate as those of the psalmist, when he says, 'Lord, by Thy favour Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong;' and 'I shall never be moved.' Alas! how little do we know the deceit of our hearts!

"But to proceed. Our spiritual education was not complete, and there were heights and depths of experience we had not reached: and our Father saw it not well to take us to heaven by a path over which no cloud had ever hung. Sickness entered our home. My children, your twin brothers, were seized with scarlet fever. It was of a malignant type, and from the first we had little hope. In ten days all was over, and both were gone."

"Oh! mother, how did you bear it?"

"With keen anguish and despair. Faith, the faith we had believed so strong, staggered and reeled, like a frail vessel before a storm.

"A few weeks more, and my girl, my only girl, was lying ill and senseless with the fever. Oh! those nights of weary watching, when the dumb heart could only utter its appeal in sighs, and pour

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out its oppression in tears! At last another little head was laid low; our daughter was taken from us. You, then a baby, and you only, were spared; and, like Rachel, I could not be comforted because my children were not."

"Did your faith quite fail you, mother?"

"This made our trial so terrible. We believed that God had smitten; but we could not trust His love in smiting. We wrote bitter things against ourselves, and murmured too against our Father. The years in which we had received 'good things' at His hands weighed as nothing against these crushing sorrows. Your father first awoke from our error. But the cause of his awaking was a new anguish to my still restive heart; he was ill. I had long feared that dry, short cough, and the bright hectic of his cheek at night; and now I saw that grief was doing its work with painful haste. Oh! how I cried to God to spare this blow! But no; He knew what I needed, and He would not 'throw away the rod.' My husband, the choice of my youth, and the friend and support of more mature age, must waste in disease and sink into the grave before I could cease from myself or yield my stubborn will. Over that closed coffin and open tomb I learned at last to say from my heart, 'Not my will, but Thine, be done. Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.'"

"And my father—was he resigned?"

"Oh yes, my boy, he was always better than I. For a time he could not submit to the loss of his children; but long before his death he acknowledged the goodness and wisdom that had taken them before him. 'Oh! Ellen,' he often said to me, 'we are short-sighted mortals. We forget whom we distrust when we murmur against God; as if He could mistake, or be wanting in tenderness. We want grace to look through what He sometimes *does*, to what He always *is*, and so to trust His doings for His own sake. Above all, we want grace to read His discipline by the light of Calvary. He that spared not His own Son, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?' So he tried to comfort me, as he saw the wild distress of my soul. But I nursed my sorrow. To me the painful discipline showed no love, and when I looked at my husband's wasted form and pallid cheek—when I saw death once more striding to my hearth to pluck away its chief joy, I could not submit.

"My faith was well nigh shipwrecked altogether. In fair weather, you see, William, I had trusted cheerfully; but when 'the wind was contrary,' and my soul 'toiled in rowing' against the storm, then I forgot the loving eyes that were watching me, and did not know the voice that cried above the tempest, 'It is I, be not afraid.' By-and-by the night came, whose dawning found me a solitary widow. No one can imagine that time; let it rest, hushed in memory. My God pitied and did not forsake me; and at last His love broke my fetters, and subdued my will, till I mourned over the ingratitude that rebelled against the Father who had given me Jesus. Then I began to understand that the Christian's feeling must be reliance upon love, though every earthly light goes out,—must be hope in a promise, when reason sees no way for its fulfilment.

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"Still my lesson was not yet fully learned, and I was to pass into experience likely to deepen my knowledge, to try my faith, and exercise my obedience. Ah! my son, much that we call faith is not sterling. I soon discovered that I was poor, as well as bereft and widowed. Your father's income died with him, and I was left to bring up my child by my own efforts."

"But did my father make no provision for you?"

"He thought he had done so; but failure and loss occurred. But as long as I had some means remaining, and the prospect of suitable employment, I did not despair amid all my sorrow. Yet disappointment followed my steps. Unexpected claims diminished my means; and the time came when I was literally without money, or the means of getting it. I began to be in want."

"Is that true, dear mother?" asked William, tenderly.

"Quite true, my son. Then I learned that faith falls short when it rests in anything below God and His Word; and we often think we are resting in Him, when we are trusting in means. So long as my money lasted I was comparatively easy. That gone, I was fearful, because faith was weak, and because, too, it was partly misplaced. But at length this error was corrected; and I will tell you how.

"I was alone one dark night. You were sleeping in your poor bed, far away from the pretty home of my married life. I had no fire; my last candle was nearly burned out. I was without food or money; my heart was bleeding, and my eyes so red and swollen with weeping, that I was obliged to lay aside the needle and put by some plain work I had taken in to procure us bread. I took my Bible, and, laying it on my solitary chair, I knelt and prayed as I think I never did before for power to trust God in this extremity. Presently I opened the book, and, turning over the leaves, my eyes fell on many gracious promises, and especially on these words, 'Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.'[1] Again I knelt and called upon the Lord, and Him only. He did answer; for thenceforth I felt able to trust Him as a child does a father—sure that He would supply all my need, though I was all unworthy, and though I could not see how. Tired and cold and hungry, I lay down by your side, with peace in my heart, and slept calmly. Some immediate relief came to me in payment for some work; and it was not long after that, on the death of an uncle, I came into the receipt of an annuity which he had, without my expecting it, bequeathed to me by will."

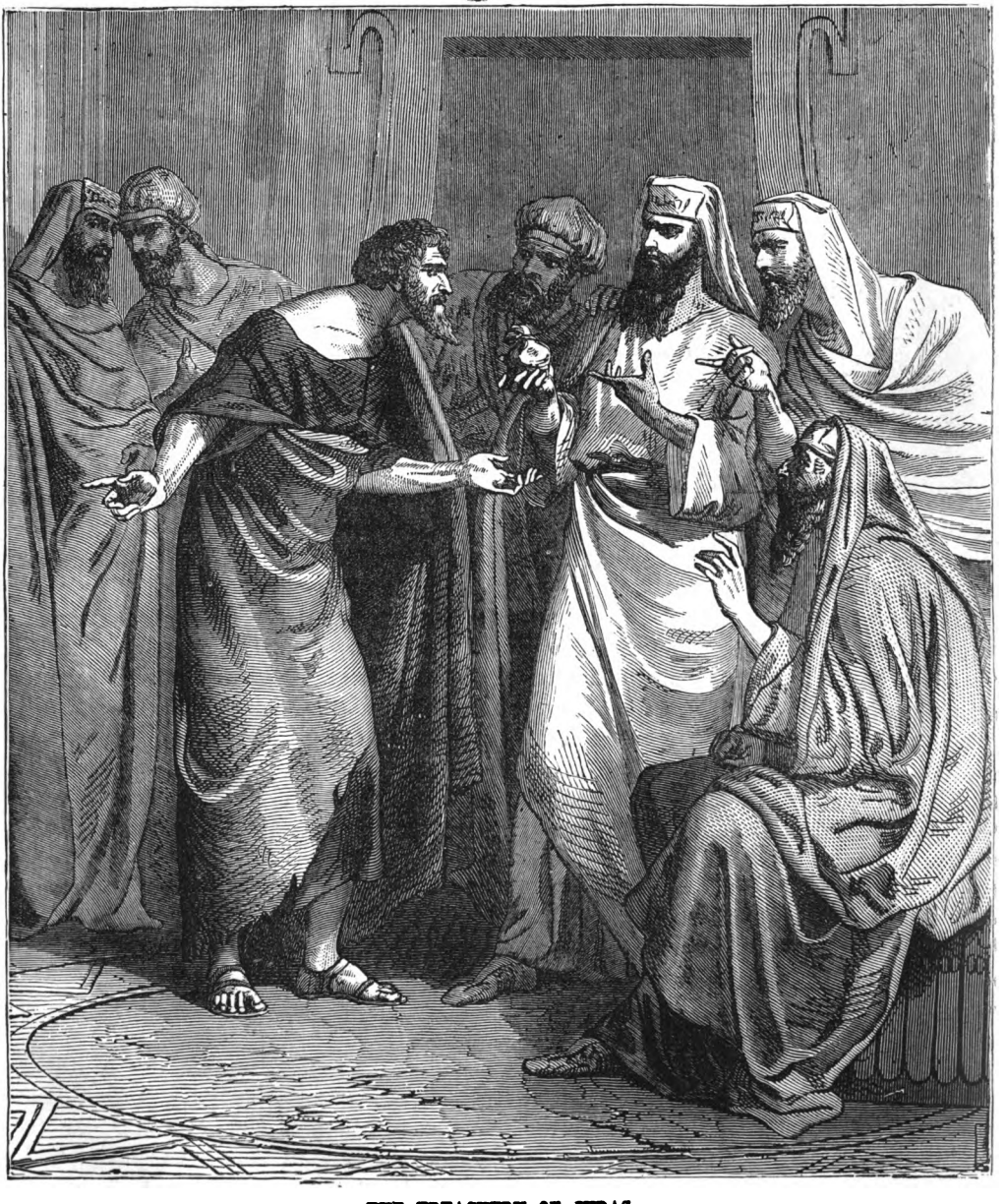
"I did not know you had been so severely tried, mother."

"No, I never before have seen cause to tell you these things; but now my experience may, I hope, be useful to you. We need the grace of the Holy Spirit in the soul to establish it in faith; such faith as shall be in active exercise, not only in prosperous circumstances, but also in the most adverse."

[1] Jer. xxxiii. 3.

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# GATHER NOT MY SOUL WITH SINNERS.



THE TREACHERY OF JUDAS.

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# Gather not my Soul with Sinners.



In a being who has the prospect of endless existence, unconcern about the future is madness; carefulness is wisdom. An affecting story from Jewish writings enforces the necessity of such carefulness. When Rabbi Jochanen-Ben-Zachai was ill, and his disciples saw him weep, they said, "Thou Light of Israel! the right-hand pillar! the strong hammer! why dost thou weep?"

He answered, "If they were carrying me before a king of flesh and blood, who is here to-day, and to-morrow in the grave; whose anger, if he were angry with me, would not last for ever; if he put me in bondage, his bondage would not be everlasting; if he condemned me to death, that death would not be eternal; whom I could soothe with words, and bribe with riches; yet even in these circumstances I should weep. But now I am going before the King of kings, the only blessed God, who liveth for ever and ever. If He be angry with me, His anger will last for ever; if He put me in bondage, His bondage will be everlasting; if He condemn me to death, that death will be eternal. Him I cannot soothe with words, or bribe with riches. When, besides, there are two ways before me—the one to hell, the other to paradise—and I know not to which they are carrying me, should I not weep?" How important is a well-founded hope for an hour so solemn!

I have a soul, an immortal spirit united to a mortal body,[1] which sees by the eye, hears by the ear, acts by my members; which thinks and plans, reasons and reflects, looks backward on the past, and forward to the future. This soul is to me unspeakably precious; "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"[2] To me it is all things; for it is my own soul. If this be saved, all is saved; if this be lost, all is lost. Nor will it long exist as now, inhabiting this world. My soul must soon enter another, a never-ending world. The whole family of man is divided into two classes, and only two—the righteous and the unrighteous. These, after this life, are gathered to those with whom in character and state they were connected: if in Jesus, to His glorified family; but if unrighteous, to the unpardoned workers of iniquity.

Everything connected with death is solemn. It is a solemn thought that the fearfully and wonderfully made frame shall moulder and decay; the sparkling eye cease to see; the watchful ear to hear; the tuneful tongue to speak; and

[1] Luke xii. 4, 5. [2] Mark viii. 36.

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the sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return," be fully executed. But that which surpasses every other fact in solemnity is, that my soul shall then be gathered to its people, and shall enter on eternal scenes, with its faculties strengthened, its capacity enlarged, and more alive to pleasure or pain, holiness or sin, than it ever could be here. This momentous change must take place when the Lord wills.

Were I gathered with them, what direful loss should I sustain! In God's presence "is fulness of joy;" at His right hand "are pleasures for evermore." My soul, if cleansed in the blood of Jesus, may inherit all this good; but if gathered with sinners, all will be lost to me. In that bliss others will rejoice; not I. In those peaceful mansions others dwell; not I. With that surpassing glory others will be honoured; not I. With that society, in which will be enjoyed sweeter converse than can be with the best below, I shall never unite. Others will enjoy it; not I.—"Lord, gather not my soul with sinners."

What must be the people of that world of woe, and what must sinners be there? Hell is the prison that was prepared for the devil and his angels,[1] and to it are gathering the worst and most hateful of rebellious men. As in heaven there is a great multitude, which no man can number, who were pious on earth, but are far holier and happier now,[2] so in hell is a great multitude, far more matured in evil than they were on earth.—"Gather not my soul with sinners."

Some sinners have been notorious for profligacy. The earth has, as it were, sickened at their abominations. Such were the people of Sodom and Gomorrah; now "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."[1] At one drunken revel of Alexander, the great conqueror, forty guests died; and he himself died of drunkenness soon after.

Some sinners have been infamous for treachery. Such was Judas, who sold his Lord. Such have been the demons of the Inquisition, smiling on their wretched victims, lying to them, professing friendship, while their whole intention was to torture them on the rack, or burn them in the flames. In treachery and falsehood they have, if possible, outdone Satan himself.

Some sinners, without as much treachery as the Inquisitors, have, like them, been distinguished for cruelty. Such was Nero: he murdered his mother; for amusement set Rome on fire, and then massacred an immense multitude of Christians. Some he crucified; others were covered with the skins of wild beasts and torn to pieces by dogs; and others were covered with combustible materials, then fastened to a stake and set on fire to light the streets by night. The Popish bishops, Gardiner and Bonner, in Mary's reign, vied with Nero in cruelty. Timour, an eastern warrior, marked his progress by two pyramids, on the road to Delhi, of a hundred thousand human heads, and gratified his cruelty by raising on the ruins of Bagdad a pyramid of ninety thousand heads; and at Ispahan the skulls of seventy thousand Persians were piled in the form of towers. A monster in the French National Assembly (1793) produced from a boy

[1] Matt. xxv. 41. [2] Rev. vii. 9.

[1] Jude 7.

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the heads of his father and mother, whom he had murdered, professedly out of love to the Republic, and was applauded by that infidel assembly.

Some sinners have displayed the most horrible love of revenge. An Italian who got an enemy into his power was about to murder him; but offered to spare his life if he would renounce Christ. The wretched man did so; and then the Italian stabbed him, exulting that he had murdered both his body and his soul.

Some sinners have been distinguished for blasphemy. "Crush the wretch!" was Voltaire's usual phrase about the blessed Jesus. Others for contention and fury. Two felons, under sentence of death in one cell, in a French prison, were heavily ironed on both hands and feet; but they quarrelled, and one of them with his teeth dreadfully tore the body of the other, who contrived with his nails to tear the face of his assailant. Their savage cries brought the officers of the prison to part them. How much like hell! Could I bear to mingle with such hateful beings?—the vile more vile, the cruel more cruel, the blasphemous fuller of blasphemy, and the revengeful of revenge, and every hellish disposition more hellish.—"Lord, gather not my soul with sinners."

The fearful apprehensions that dying sinners have had of their impending doom, add weight to these mournful considerations. Altamont cried out, "Didst thou feel half the mountain that is on me, thou wouldst struggle with the martyr for his stake, and bless heaven for the flames; that is not an everlasting flame; that is not an unquenchable fire!" Of Francis Newport it is stated, that seeing a fire in his room, he uttered a wish that he could lie and burn upon that fire a hundred thousand years, if in that way he could gain pardon and escape eternal destruction.—"Lord, gather not my soul with sinners."

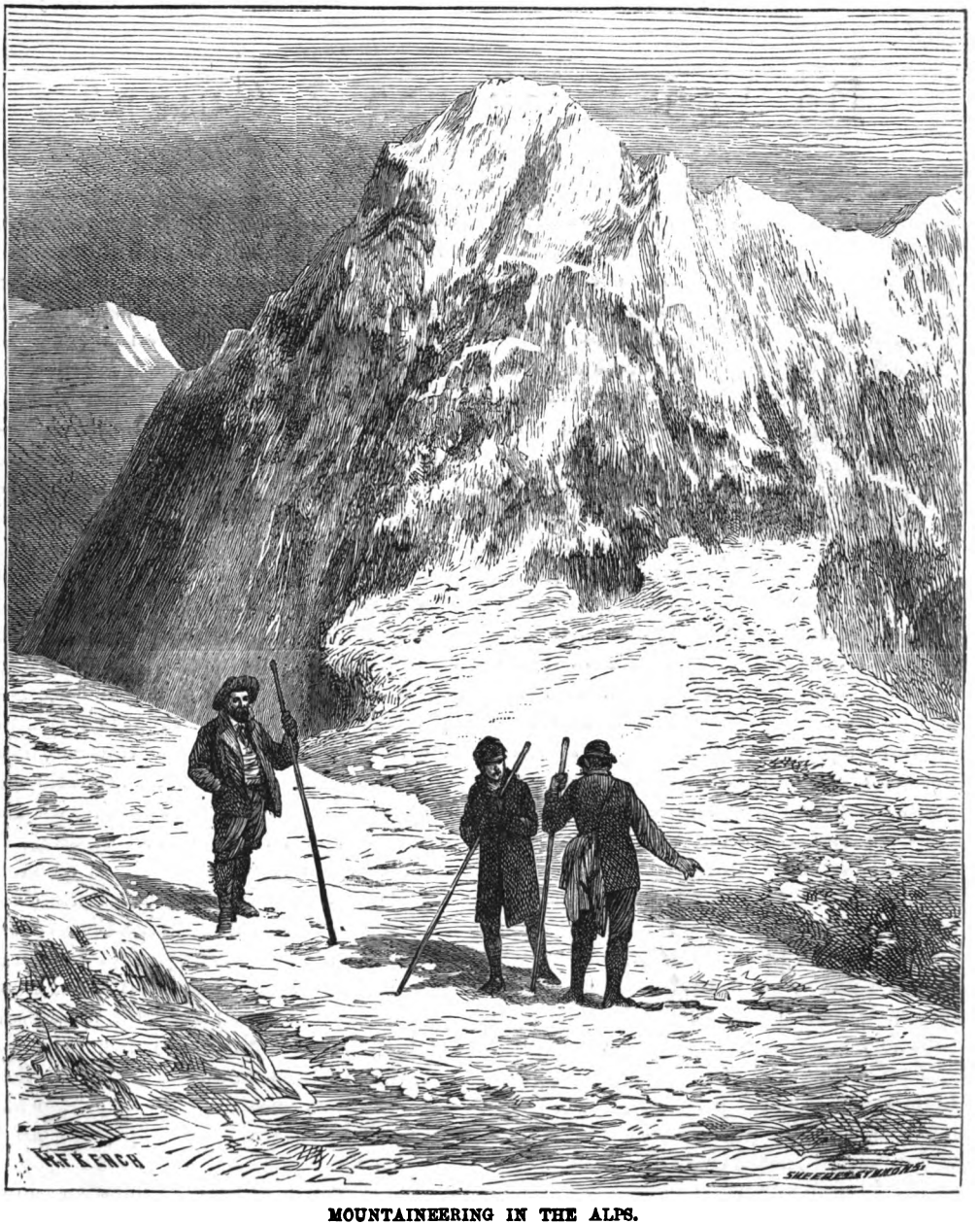
Oh, gather me with Thy redeemed. Lord, save; or I perish! Like Thy happy friends let me die; like them let me rise to the resurrection of life, and like them abide in Thy presence, and love and rejoice, and adore and praise for ever!

Not open sinners only, but the trifling and undecided are liable to be gathered with sinners. How amiable and moral soever persons may be, without Christ there is no salvation. Come at once as He invites you.[1] Believe in Christ and be saved; thus entrust your all to Him, and then instead of fearing to be gathered with sinners, you may rejoice in the blessed assurance, "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness."[2]

[1] Matt. xi. 28, 29. [2] Psa. xvii. 15.

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# Do You Wish for a Guide?



MOUNTAINEERING IN THE ALPS.

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# Do You Wish for a Guide?



In some countries, when a traveller has occasion to pass through an intricate forest, to cross a mountain, or traverse a plain where the paths are not easily discovered, he takes care to provide himself with a guide. This guide is a man who has by long habit made himself well acquainted with the way: one whose knowledge enables him to avoid the dangerous places—who knows where shelter may be obtained if a storm should come on, and who can at the same time point out every object worthy of notice.

Were the traveller rash enough to proceed without taking this precaution, he might reasonably expect to meet with some disaster, even if he should escape with life. If, likewise, after having engaged a guide, he were to act in direct opposition to his advice, he might very probably suffer for his self-will.

Two young men were once journeying together over the Alps. They were alike interested in the pursuit of some object which had attracted their attention, when suddenly and somewhat unceremoniously they were bidden by the guide to follow him. The elder of the two, though unacquainted with the cause for alarm, trusted to the judgment of his conductor, and by this means reached a place of safety just as a heavy cloud, laden with electric fluid, burst over the spot he had quitted. His companion, however, refused to accompany him, because he did not see the danger, and was killed, thus falling a victim to his presumption and self-sufficiency.

Reader, you are a traveller through this world, and you stand as much in need of a guide as he who journeys through the forest, over the mountains, or in the pathless desert. You are placed on a spot where there is much that is beautiful to attract the eye, to please the ear, and to furnish the mind with materials for thought. The blue firmament, with its myriads of stars, which are supposed to be suns in the centre of systems as vast as our own; the down of the butterfly's wing, which the microscope has discovered to be minute feathers, as perfect in their form as those which deck the ostrich or the bird of paradise; the rich foliage of the lofty oak, which strikes its roots deep and far, and thus for centuries braves the stormy blast, each and all bespeak creative wisdom and creative power: they tell you there is a God,—

"And if a God there is, that God how great!"

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But the *light of nature* is not a guide to heaven.

The *book of providence* will in most instances shadow forth the directing hand which moves unseen in all the affairs of men. You perceive sin working out its own punishment by bringing misery, disease, and death upon the sinner; and the pious, the honourable, and the upright braving the shocks of adversity, and standing erect amid the storm. But God's ways are at other times inscrutable and dark to mortal vision. The widow and the fatherless frequently pine in want, whilst their oppressor revels in the riches of which he has unjustly deprived them. The prodigal forsakes the home of his childhood, and breaks the heart of the mother who nurtured him, and for a time at least wears the appearance of a reckless enjoyment of his wicked career. The *book of providence* cannot, therefore, teach you how you may attain everlasting life.

*Conscience*, that "inner self" which whispers to the soul, giving its verdict on every thought, word, and action, will in many cases point out the path you ought to follow. It will say, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Or when you have swerved from the straight line of duty, it will thunder forth its terrors. But this is all it can do. It cannot reveal a way whereby reparation can be made for past offences. It cannot expiate, though it may condemn. The *light of conscience* is not therefore a sufficient guide.

But because neither nature, providence, nor conscience can conduct you safely to eternal bliss, God has provided a sure and unerring guide. This is His revealed word—the BIBLE, applied by the Holy Spirit. Whatever may be your age, sex, or condition in life—whether you are ignorant or schooled in the learning of this world, it is alike your highest privilege, as well as your bounden duty, to consult this guide. Without it you will be exposed to dangers far more terrific than those which lurk in the forest, impend amid the mountain passes, or meet you in the desert. Without it life will be to you a maze, full of doubt and perplexity, and death (to quote the dying words of a celebrated infidel) "a leap in the dark."

The travellers' guide spoken of already may fail in performing the task he undertakes. He may occasionally err in judgment, and consequently lead those who confide in him into the very dangers he professes to be able to avoid. Others may be treacherous to their trust. This is not an uncommon occurrence. Guides have been sometimes leagued with banditti, and have decoyed their unsuspecting victims into murderous hands. The Bible is, however, an infallible guide. It was never yet known to mislead any one who sought its direction by the aid of the Holy Spirit, with a real sincerity, and in a really humble and teachable spirit. It is a faithful guide, because it proceeds from the Spring of goodness as well as knowledge. Your confidence in it may, therefore, be unbounded.

In the "Pilgrim's Progress," Christian meets, in the first stage of his journey, with Evangelist, who represents the Word of God. He it was who pointed out to him the way to the cross. Divine

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illumination may come through the medium of a book, a sermon, or the conversation of pious persons; but it always springs from the same source. Ask the Christian writer whence he derives the elevated morals which adorn his pages, and he will answer, "From the Bible." Ask the faithful preacher whence he is furnished with topics which bear on the interests of all ages and all conditions of men, and he will reply, "From the Bible." Turn to the Christian portion of society, and inquire what is the spring of their joys, consolations, and hopes; ask them whither they fly when in affliction, whence they seek strength to resist temptation, and where they gain a true knowledge of themselves and of God. They, too, will answer, "From the Bible."

The Bible, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, is the *only* unerring guide on earth.

The young man of whom mention has been made, lost his life through a disregard of the warning and counsel of his guide. But you, reader, are endangering your immortal soul, if you are neglecting the warnings and counsels contained in the Word of God.

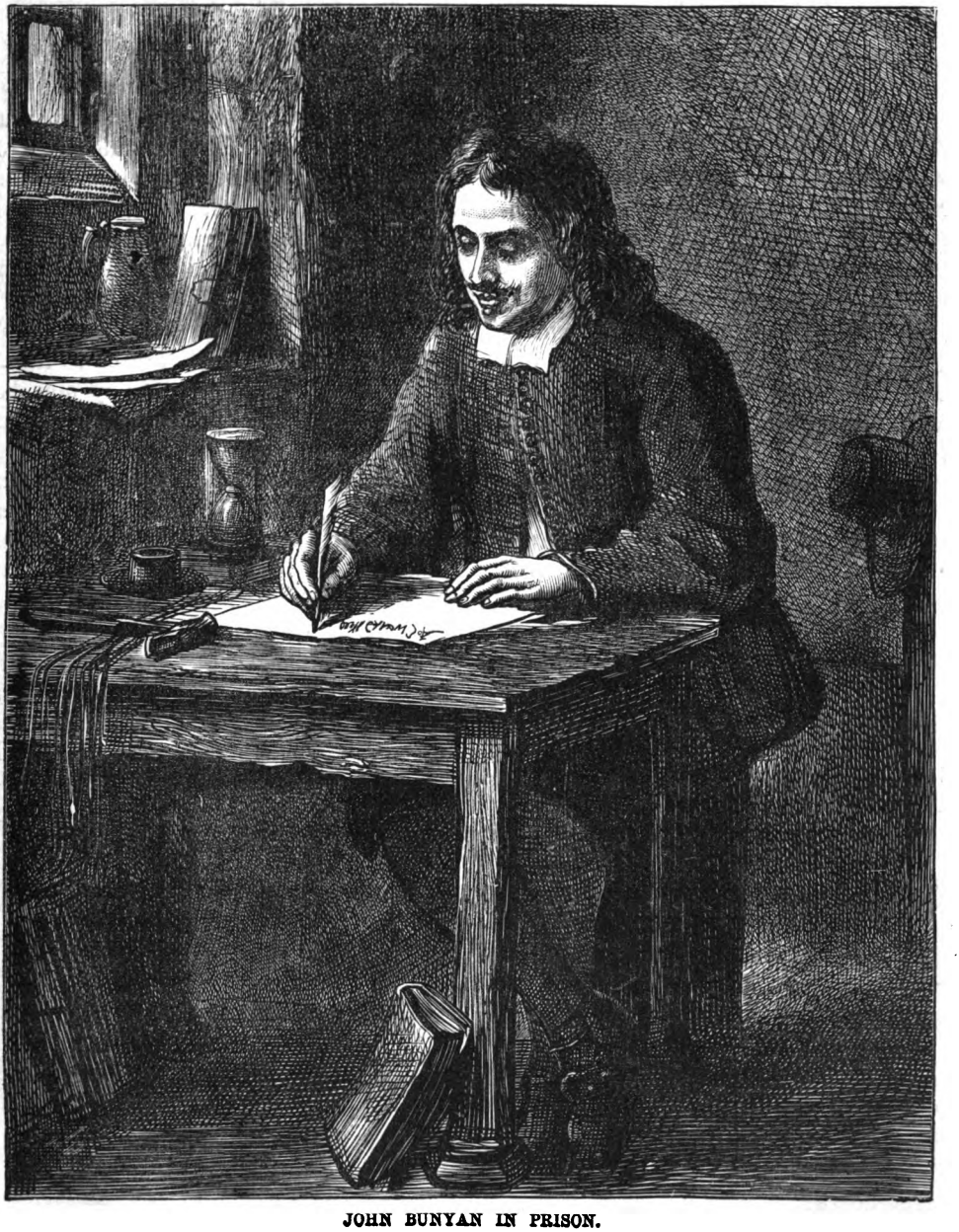
There is no excuse in this land for any person, however poor, being without a Bible, and awful are the responsibilities of those who have this privilege, and prize it not. When Bibles were so scarce that they were chained in the chancels of the churches, people would walk several miles to read or hear a few pages from them. Many of the martyrs shed their blood, or perished at the stake, for no other crime than that of possessing a Bible, and making its contents the rule of their faith and the guide of their lives. We are not subjected to these dangers; there are now no prison bars to inclose, nor faggots kindled to burn the readers of the Word of God; but, alas! there is an eternal prison-house, and there are everlasting burnings for those who refuse to read or obey it. It is not a light matter to disregard the advice given by this heavenly guide.

The question, then, put to every reader, in the title of this tract, is, "Do you wish to have a guide?" Perhaps, by the grace of God, you have already made this Book of books the "man of your counsels;" if so, happy are you, for "the Holy Scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." But, if you are pursuing a course contrary to the Divine will, it is far more pleasing to endeavour to persuade by the gracious declarations of the Scriptures, than to terrify by their threatenings.

The Bible abounds with invitations and promises of mercy and love, whereby to draw wandering and perishing sinners to flee from ruin and to lay hold of eternal life; by the grace of the Holy Spirit to repent and believe the gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

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# The Burden and the Cross.



JOHN BUNYAN IN PRISON.

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# The Burden and the Cross.



Have you ever read Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress?" If not, I advise you to get it, and read it without delay. It is one of the best and most interesting books in the English language, and all about the most solemn of subjects—the way of salvation. It will bear reading more than once. Nay, I will venture to say that the second reading will be liked better than the first, and the third better than the second; and that is high praise for any book.

Here is a leaf from it, by way of sample.

"Now I saw in my dream that the high way up which Christian was to go was fenced on either side with a wall, and that wall was called Salvation. Up this way, therefore, did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back.

"He ran thus till he came to a place somewhat ascending; and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below, in the bottom, a sepulchre. So I saw in my dream that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more.

"Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said, with a merry heart, 'He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death.' Then he stood still awhile, to look and wonder; for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the cross should thus ease him of his burden. He looked therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks. Now, as he stood looking and weeping, behold, three shining ones came to him, and saluted him with, 'Peace be to thee.' So the first said to him, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee;' the second stripped him of his rags, and clothed him with change of raiment: the third also set a mark on his forehead, and gave him a roll, with a seal upon it, which he bade him look on as he ran, and that he should give it in at the celestial gate; so they went their way. Then Christian gave three leaps for joy, and went on singing."

You must understand that this man Christian had left his native place, and gone on pilgrimage, because he had read in a book that that place would be destroyed by fire from heaven; and having been put into the road by a person named Evangelist, was now on his way to the Celestial City. Bunyan's whole book is an *allegory;* that is, a kind of story with a hidden meaning; the meaning thus far is plain enough. The City of Destruction, from which Christian fled, means this world of sin; the book which told him it should be destroyed was the Bible; Evangelist was some Christian teacher; the Celestial City is heaven; and the road to it is the "narrow way," of which our Lord Jesus Christ spoke:

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in other words, the whole of a person's Christian course from his conversion to his death.

Now, at the time when our leaf begins, Christian had set out on the Christian course, but had little comfort, by reason of a load on his back. This was the guilt of his sins. He felt the burden, and had not yet learned how to rid himself of it. This was a great distress to him; whomsoever he met he asked to help him off with his burden; wherever he went, this was his chief thought. So, though we find him travelling in the right road, yet it was "not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back."

But now comes in our leaf. All at once he came to a place where stood a cross, and, a little below, a sepulchre. And no sooner did he get up to the cross, than his load fell from his back, and was seen no more.

How beautifully this shows the only way in which any sinner can get rid of the burden of his sins—by coming to the cross of Christ. The load which Christian bore is, by nature, upon every one; for "there is none righteous, no, not one." A man does not feel it till the eyes of his understanding are opened. Christian never felt his burden while he lived in the City of Destruction. But no sooner is conviction of sin wrought in the heart, than a man's guilt becomes a sore burden to him, too heavy to bear. He looks this way and that for relief, and perhaps tries many means in vain. Sometimes a round of ceremonies is tried, sometimes the strictest self-denial, sometimes a course of good works towards others; but all without avail. Nothing of this kind can take the load away. There it is still, as heavy as ever. The cure is not found out yet. But at length the cross of Christ is seen. And now light breaks upon the soul. The Holy Spirit reveals in the heart Jesus Christ dying on the cross, and thereby making atonement for sin. Faith, weak perhaps at first, yet true, lays hold on this newly found Saviour, and the burden falls. Now hope and peace spring up in the heart; and the poor sinner, burdened no more, goes on his way rejoicing.

What wonder that Christian was "glad and lightsome?" who would not be, to be eased of such a load? What wonder that he could scarcely believe at first that so simple a means had brought so great and speedy relief? Nor are we surprised to read that as he looked and looked at the cross, tears ran down his cheeks: tears, not of sorrow, but of joy and love; joy for pardon, peace, and salvation; and love to that gracious and loving Saviour who bore our sins on the tree.

Then three angels came to him, all speaking peace, yet each with a separate message. One assured him of pardon; another clothed him with change of raiment; and the third set a mark on his forehead, and gave him a sealed roll of writing, to look at as he travelled, and to give in when he got to the Celestial City.

These were three good errands that the angels came on. The first told him he was *forgiven*. Happy news! the best a sinner can hear; yet not always received and embraced, because of unbelief. True, *we* have no angel to bring us the tidings. But we have the word and Spirit of God; the word, proclaiming pardon, through the blood of Christ, to

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every returning sinner; the Spirit, bearing witness within the sinner's heart. Happy they who believe. What the second angel did is taken from the prophecy of Zechariah, where Joshua, the high priest, has his "filthy garments" taken from him, and is clothed with change of raiment. The doctrine taught by this is, that every believer is looked upon by God as clad no longer in his own sins, but in the spotless righteousness of Christ, imputed to him through faith. The mark set by the third angel on Christian's forehead is that mentioned in the Epistle to the Ephesians: "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance;" and also in several places in the book of Revelation: the seal of God marking believers as His own. The roll given to him means the right or title to salvation through Christ, felt in the believing heart; the inward assurance of reconciliation with God through the atoning blood. With such gifts, well might Christian go on his way singing for joy.

Thus, reader, I have tried to give you a taste of Bunyan's book. Make yourself acquainted with the whole. It is well worth reading, because it is interesting, and scriptural, and real. I mean by *real*, that Bunyan himself had gone through what he describes; and that what he wrote, he wrote from experience. And no one can ever write well on such subjects without this.

And now let me ask you, Do *you* know anything of these things by experience? Have you ever felt Christian's burden, or relief?

Perhaps you have never even felt the burden. But let not that make you think that it is not on you. The load of guilt is on every unconverted person, though he do not feel it; and it will sink him in endless ruin, unless he get rid of it. Sin causes you no sorrow, and little fear; but that is, not because you are safe, but because you are asleep. What you want is to be awakened to feel your load, to see your danger, and to flee from the wrath to come! Ah! it is a false peace that comes from not being aware of your state.

But perhaps you *have* been awakened. Something has touched your conscience and made you think; a text, a sermon, a death, a sickness, or something else. You do not feel so easy as you did. You have tried to shake off troublesome thoughts, but in vain. Go where you will, this feeling comes again and again, that you have sinned, that you are not safe, that all is not right between your soul and God. If this be your state, you are just the person to find comfort from Bunyan's book. See how Christian lost his burden. The very same way is open to *you*. All other means had failed; but when he came to the cross, at once the burden fell from his back. Do you go to the cross too, that is, to Christ crucified. Seek not relief in the world or in the law, or in anything else, but only in Christ.

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# PRAYING OR SINNING—

## WHICH SHALL BE GIVEN UP?




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# PRAYING OR SINNING—

## WHICH SHALL BE GIVEN UP?



HERE is a saying of an old author, that, "Either prayer will make a man give over sinning, or sin will make a man give over praying." Does any reader of these lines feel inclined to reply, "Yes, it is all very well to quote old sayings; but I know such an one and such another, who go to church or to chapel as regularly, and say their prayers at home as devoutly as you can wish; but, for all that, they are no better than their neighbours. They have not left off sinning yet, let old authors say what they may."

Granted; but this is not all that you might have said. Not a few, it is to be feared, say many prayers, in order that they may sin the more. Many, after having been savingly converted to God, have confessed that, though they said prayers times without number, and it may be, with much apparent devotion, yet they never truly prayed!

As to one case of the kind there can be no mistake, for we read of it in the Bible. A man belonged to a particular sect, famous for this one thing—that they made long prayers. He was likewise one of the most devout of the whole sect, and so had always been in the habit of making these long prayers; yet, when he was savingly converted to God, it is said of him, as a thing as new as it was strange, "Go, and enquire for Saul of Tarsus: for, BEHOLD, he prayeth!"

What, then, is prayer? We see what it is not; but what is it? When a person, in imminent danger of perishing from fire or from water, calls upon another for help, he means what he says, and really wishes for the aid he implores. When a person in destitute circumstances, and ready to perish, begs for relief from one able to afford it; or when any one has set his whole mind on the attainment of some particular object, and requests the assistance of a man of great influence, who has the power of obtaining it for him; such persons are perfectly sincere in the petitions they present. This may serve to give us some notion of what prayer really is.

What is prayer? Perhaps it cannot be better explained than in the following words:—It is the expression of sincere and heartfelt desire for blessings which God has promised to give, offered up with faith in the mediation and intercession of Jesus Christ. It is the cry of one who is conscious of his imminent danger by reason of sin, to Him who is "able to save to the uttermost." It is the petition of one who feels he is perishing from want, to Him who is able to "supply all

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his need." It is the giving utterance to the heart-felt wish of one who has set his whole mind on the attainment of those spiritual blessings which God has promised, and upon God Himself, as his final rest and portion; prompting him, it may be, even to use the language of one who is held forth in the Word of God as an example to those who pray: "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me."

Now, if a person has such desires, he must wish to be holy. Not that he will henceforth be free from the rising up in his mind of sinful desires; but they will be subdued. He must have a prevailing desire to be holy, for the plainest of all reasons. The salvation of which he now longs to partake, is a deliverance from sin in every sense of the word; from all sinful feelings and inclinations as truly as from the punishment that sin deserves. The blessings God has to bestow are spiritual—*holy* blessings. The heaven in which they all end is a *holy* place. God Himself is *holy*. Say, then, whether it is possible for a man to have directly opposite desires at the same moment. Can he supremely and prevailingly love the very thing which he hates, or hate what he loves?

How plain, then, is the consequence! If a man *really* prays, he cannot willingly and habitually sin. If he willingly goes on in the ways of sin, he cannot *really* pray; he must give up prayer. The two cannot exist together. There is not, there cannot be, any argument in saying, "I know such a man who prays, but he has not given up sinning for all that." Hypocrites there have been in all ages, who have professed to pray, without meaning a word they uttered. The prayer of all such is "abomination to the Lord."

But we have said that real prayer is not only the sincere desire of the heart, but that it must be offered up with faith in the mediation and intercession of Jesus Christ; and this is a point of the greatest importance. By this is meant, not merely that we ought to end our prayers with a mention of the name of Christ, but that, in order to pray aright, we must have a steadfast faith in Him, as our righteous Advocate with the Father, who has "entered into the holy place;" that is, into heaven itself, as it is said, "with His own blood." Faith, too, is always connected with repentance, and cannot exist without it; and the meaning of repentance is a hearty sorrow for sin, and a desire to forsake it. So here, again, we are brought to the same conclusion—that praying will make a man give up sinning, or sinning will make him give up praying.

Which, then, will you choose, and which will you give up? This is the all-important question which is now put to you. Oh! look for one moment at the consequences of each; for be assured they are as certain as cause and effect can be, in any case whatever.

The consequences of prayer!—These are stated by our blessed Saviour in a single sentence. He does not lay down a doctrine or a system respecting it, but He simply states a fact, when He says, "Every one that asketh receiveth." There is only one obstacle which can prevent all the needful blessings our heavenly Father has to bestow from being poured out upon us. Let sin be pardoned and removed for ever;

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and as certainly as the sun will shine when the clouds are rolled away, so surely will the God of all grace lift up upon us the light of His countenance, and bestow all things needful here, and eternal glory hereafter. He who lives in the habit of constant, fervent, believing prayer, has a refuge in all trouble—a guide in all perplexity—a joy of which no one who does not possess it can form any conception—and an antidote against the fear of death.

But the consequences of sinning—what are they? We tremble to think of them. It is true we do read, even in the Bible, in one place, of the "pleasures of sin," but they are styled, "the pleasures of sin *for a season;*" and many other passages, and facts without number, might be brought to prove that they are as vain, and hollow, and deceitful, as they are temporary. We see the misery which sin brings in its train in the present world. We read in the inspired Book of God such sentences as the following:—"Be sure your sin will find you out;" "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Oh, what a prospect for those who choose "sinning!" To walk for a few short hours in the sparks we have kindled, and then to "lie down in sorrow;" to stand in the presence of Him whose mercy we have refused—whose anger we have despised; to have nothing to look forward to, but "judgment and fiery indignation," from which we can never escape. "Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me."

But now is the golden opportunity; now God waits to be gracious—invites you to pray—promises to hear; only delay not, lest it be gone for ever. Do you say, you know not how to pray? It is God alone who, by His Holy Spirit, can pour out upon you a "spirit of grace and supplication;" but ask Him to do so, and thus to "assist the prayers that you make before Him."

Not many years since, a thoughtless and irreligious soldier was dangerously wounded in the field of battle, and in consequence laid upon a sick bed, with the near prospect, as it appeared to him, of an eternity for which he was conscious he was unprepared. He endeavoured to pray, but could not. He neither knew how to approach the throne of grace, nor what words to make use of. At last he recollected that, when a boy, he attended a Sunday-school, and that, whilst attending that school, he had been in the habit of learning a collect every Sunday. The words he had learned were still fresh in his remembrance. He poured out his heart fervently in their language; and, "behold," he "prayed!" It was the commencement to him of a new life. He recovered; but from henceforth he became a completely altered man—a "praying Christian."

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# Go Forward!



THE DESTRUCTION OF PHARAOH'S ARMY.

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# Go Forward!

For the New Year.



When the children of Israel were escaping out of the land of Egypt, they were led by Moses into a situation of great difficulty. The Red Sea was before them, a wilderness was on either side, and Pharaoh was pursuing them with a mighty army of horsemen and chariots. Yet, though according to human appearances they were in great danger, it was wrong to fear that God would forsake them. He had brought them out of bondage by many signs and wonders; and would He now leave them to destruction? He had begun a work of deliverance, and would He not finish it?

Still when God's command to Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward,"[1] was fulfilled, and the Israelites heard their leader's voice bidding them advance towards the sea, they were doubtless startled. They might naturally ask, How shall we go forward, when the sea lies before us? Moses indeed was informed by God that He would make a path through the deep for the ransomed host to pass through; but they were simply told to proceed, trusting in the promise of the Lord of hosts that He would find a way for their relief. God would not, could not fail them, when they were following His own directions.

We see in this incident of Jewish history an illustration of God's way of dealing with His people in all generations. We find in the order given to the Israelites to "go forward," a suitable exhortation for all who are travelling on the way of life everlasting—an exhortation peculiarly applicable at the beginning of another year. The believer's course through this world is often a difficult and perplexed one, requiring earnest diligence and simple faith in God the Saviour. We should not only believe in Christ for the pardon of our sins, and in the Holy Ghost to renew and sanctify our hearts; but we should trust in Divine grace and providence to lead us safely through life's journey to the promised abode of endless glory. "We walk by faith, not by sight;" and our confidence in the wisdom and goodness of God is often put to the test, when there is no apparent help for us from man, and we are compelled to rely wholly on the promised succour of an unseen Redeemer.

Go forward! Perhaps the way of duty lies before you, plainly marked out by the Divine commandment; and you know that turning to the right hand or to the left would be to transgress God's law or grieve the Holy Spirit. Yet obedience

[1] Exod. xiv. 15.

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is very difficult. It may perhaps lead to the loss of what appears to be great temporal good; and you wish that some easier course had been before you. You are tempted to complain that God has brought you into such a position. But is not this "the trial of your faith" mentioned in the Scriptures? Is your situation more perplexing than that of the Israelites in front of the Red Sea? Have you not the same Divine Deliverer and Helper, who is present with His people at all times? He has already saved you from guilt and wrath and the power of sin; and can He not, will He not save you out of every other trouble? His resources cannot fail. He may now be waiting to apply a deliverance which has been long in preparation, and to give the help you need. Whatever, then, be the discouragements and difficulties of the way before you, trust Him, and go forward.

Go forward! Alas! your strength is perfect weakness, and you are already halting in the way. You are almost wearied with the ruggedness of the road, and the severe conflicts through which you have passed. Spiritual foes harass you on every side; and you dread the fiery assaults of the wicked one. You feel as if you had no more courage for the Christian contest; and you shrink back from the command to advance and renew the fight of faith. But has not Christ said that His strength is made perfect in weakness, and that He will never leave or forsake you?[1] Are not these spiritual exercises through which you are called to pass the means of educating your soul in the ways of righteousness, and of strengthening it in spiritual virtues? Is not this training of you in godliness a sign that your heavenly Father cares for your eternal good, whilst He is making you ready for that blessed place which Christ is preparing for His sanctified people? Depend upon it, the Captain of your salvation will never lead His ransomed host into a battle where He will not aid them in the fight, and give them a glorious victory.

Go forward! It may be that, on surveying the past year, you find you have been traversing a wilderness in which sorrows have abounded. You shrink from the idea of encountering such sorrows again. And yet what ground have you for thinking, that the year upon which you have entered will bring fewer or lighter troubles than the last? With the prospect of many trials before you, you exclaim, "Oh, when shall this journey end? and when shall I reach a heavenly home and be at rest?" Such feelings may be quite natural; still, it does not appear to be your Lord's will that you should yet cease from your pilgrimage. Be not faint-hearted nor discouraged. Watch against the unbelief, which once led David to say in his heart, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul;" whereas the unchanging God had promised to give him the kingdom of Israel. He who has brought you thus far on the way to Canaan will not leave you to perish in the wilderness. He who has begun a good work of grace in you will doubtless complete it in His own time.[1] There is no change of purpose in Him. He never begins a work which He does not intend to finish: He never promises what He will not perform. If

[1] 2 Cor. xii. 9; Heb. xiii. 5.

[1] Phil. i. 6.

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you have troubles and temptations and spiritual conflicts, these are the very things which the Scriptures have spoken of as lying in your path heavenward. They are God's loving discipline by which He designs to wean your heart from the world, and to fix it on Himself, as your only source of peace. Amid all these trials do not doubt God's love and faithfulness towards you. He will be always with His people, and will keep them by His mighty power "through faith unto salvation."

Go forward! Threescore and ten years is the Scripture limit of our earthly pilgrimage. One of these years is just past, and perhaps you have nearly reached the limit. Yours has been a long life, and you are now at the end of your journey. If you have travelled safely through so many years, and are now at the very gates of the city of God, you may be abundantly satisfied with your lot. Once again you may say with the apostle, as you have done before, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."[1]

[1] Phil. iii. 13, 14.

Go forward! Can these words be addressed to all? Can they be urged upon the ungodly and impenitent? O sinner, you have passed through another year of rebellion against God. Perhaps during the months that are past you have heard neither God's warnings nor His calls of mercy. You have turned your back upon His house and His ordinances. Or it may be you *have* heard, but have disregarded or despised all God's truth. In either case you have entered upon a new year with a heart hardened against God; and at this moment you stand among those who are His enemies by wicked works. To bid you go forward in your present course, would be to urge you to fill up the measure of your iniquities, and to perish in them. The word to *you* must be Go NOT forward. Pause—consider your state and your danger. Repent, and turn from your mad career. Whatever it may cost you to give up your evil ways, resolve in God's strength to give them up. The blood of Christ can blot out all your iniquities, and the Spirit of God can give the strength you need. May you know this by happy experience, and may the mercy of God in all its fulness be yours!

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# What Prayer can Do.



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# What Prayer can Do.

It seemed as if the whole village had turned out to attend Margaret Mason's funeral. Every one mourned as for a friend. Margaret, though a poor woman, was an important person in the village. Wherever there was a sick neighbour to nurse, or a mourner to be comforted, there this hard-working woman might be found. No wonder, therefore, that the tears which fell on the day of her burial were tears of true and abundant sorrow.

But there was one mourner standing aloof from the rest, who seemed almost bowed down with grief. No one seemed to recognise her. She was a woman advanced in years.

When the funeral had dispersed, the stranger still lingered near the grave. And when it was filled up, and the hillock smoothed, she took a young rose-tree from beneath her cloak, and planted it on the grave. With a quickened step she then passed down the village, stopped for an instant at the gate of Margaret's little garden, plucked a sprig of sweet-brier and a bit of the flower which our villagers call the "everlasting," and was about to walk away.

"Dear me!" exclaimed one of the old people, "if that isn't Mrs. Stainton, the pawnbroker's wife, who used to live at the end of the village. Why, it must be well nigh five-and-twenty years since she and her husband gave up business and left the place."

"Nay, nay," said another elderly person, "it isn't she. Sally Stainton was a hard, grinding woman, and never had a tear to spare for the living or for the dead."

I heard no more, for I hastened to overtake the stranger. "We are strangers to each other," I said, "but we are fellow-mourners to-day. You must go home with me to rest yourself, and have a cup of tea." She hesitated a little at first, but was soon persuaded to accompany me.

"Are you a relation of Mrs. Mason?"

"No, ma'am; at least not that sort of kin which you mean, though in heaven, I believe, it will come out that we are very nearly related;" and the woman wept like a child. "I believe," she continued, "that it is owing to the prayers of that dear saint, whose body has been put into the grave this afternoon, that my soul was ever snatched from the wrath to come, and brought to Christ."

"Margaret herself would have told you," said I, "that the praise is due, not to her prayers, but to the saving grace and living intercession of God's dear Son. However, I believe we mean the same thing."

After tea, Mrs. Stainton entered into a fuller narrative. "Late one evening," she said, "long after the shop was closed, Frank Mason (Margaret's unworthy husband) came to our side-door, with a bundle of wearing apparel to put into pawn. At first I refused to have anything to say to him out of business hours; but he said he was going next day to the

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races, and must have money on any terms. So my greediness of gain prevailed, as usual. I advanced the money, and took the things. In those days my heart was as hard as flint. Yet when I turned over the carefully mended clothes, that cloak which had faced so many a storm, those shoes which had trodden so many a rough mile in duty's path, those coarse petticoats always tidy, yet worn so threadbare, somehow my heart misgave me. When I slept, I dreamed of the patient, long-suffering wife; when I awoke, I thought only of her. I tried to fight it out with conscience, but it would not do. So I rose earlier than usual, tied up the clothes in a bundle, and hurried with them and some breakfast to the cottage. Hearing Margaret Mason's voice, I waited, and listened for a minute at the window. I expected to hear reproaches and complainings; but the words I heard were these: 'Forgive him, Lord. Thou who clothest the lilies, wilt Thou not much more clothe me also? Thou knowest that I have need of these things. Yet, though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither fruit be on the vine: I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation.' I heard no more; but after giving Margaret the things—I hardly knew how it was—but something within prompted me to say, as I was turning away, 'Mrs. Mason, speak my name sometimes, will you, in your prayers?' Till that hour I had never cared for prayer, and felt no reverence for it, and no need of it.

"I shall never forget that walk home. 'What is it?' said I to myself, 'that makes her to differ from me? If I were in her place, I should either be storming with rage or sulking in despair. But there she is, praying for the forgiveness of the man who has cruelly wronged her. She talks to the great God as to a friend, and calls Him the God of her salvation. I know nothing about the God of this Christian woman. Oh, Margaret, Margaret! would I were like you, with all your griefs and all your wrongs!'

"As I drew near home the sun was shining on the three gilded balls, the pawnbroker's sign. They brought sad thoughts about the way in which our business had been carried on. I remembered how covetous and hard-hearted I had been; how I had cared for nothing but getting money. I went upstairs to an old lumber-room, and there I sat down by myself. There was a heavy weight upon my heart. I groaned aloud, though I hardly knew what I wanted. Presently I said to myself, I wonder if I can pray; but no words would come. At last I fairly smote upon my breast, and cried, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' I knew afterwards, but not for a good while, that God, by His Holy Spirit, had put those words into my heart; though I believe I had not heard them since I was a child at a Sunday-school. Well! I rummaged out the only Bible we held in pawn (for we scarcely ever took Bibles), and turned over its leaves. I was as ignorant as a baby where to find the places. You will hardly believe it, but I searched all through Genesis to try to find that story about the publican, from which I had drawn my first prayer.

"Ah! for a good while, I do assure you, it was uphill work. But God would not let me slide back again into old ways. He hedged me in with the terrors of the

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law, and would not let me get out, till He had shown me a 'door' into pardon and peace; and that 'door' was Jesus Christ.

"But, in the meantime, God had been teaching me, in His Word and by His Spirit, that I must not expect peace of mind while I continued to live as I had done. The temptations of our business appeared too great for me. So I implored Davie (that's my husband) to give up the pawn-shop, whatever it might cost us. At first he flew into a passion, and declared that he was not going to be 'henpecked' out of a good business by any woman. So, then, God showed me that my place was to wait a bit, and be patient, and to put the difficulty into Christ's hands.

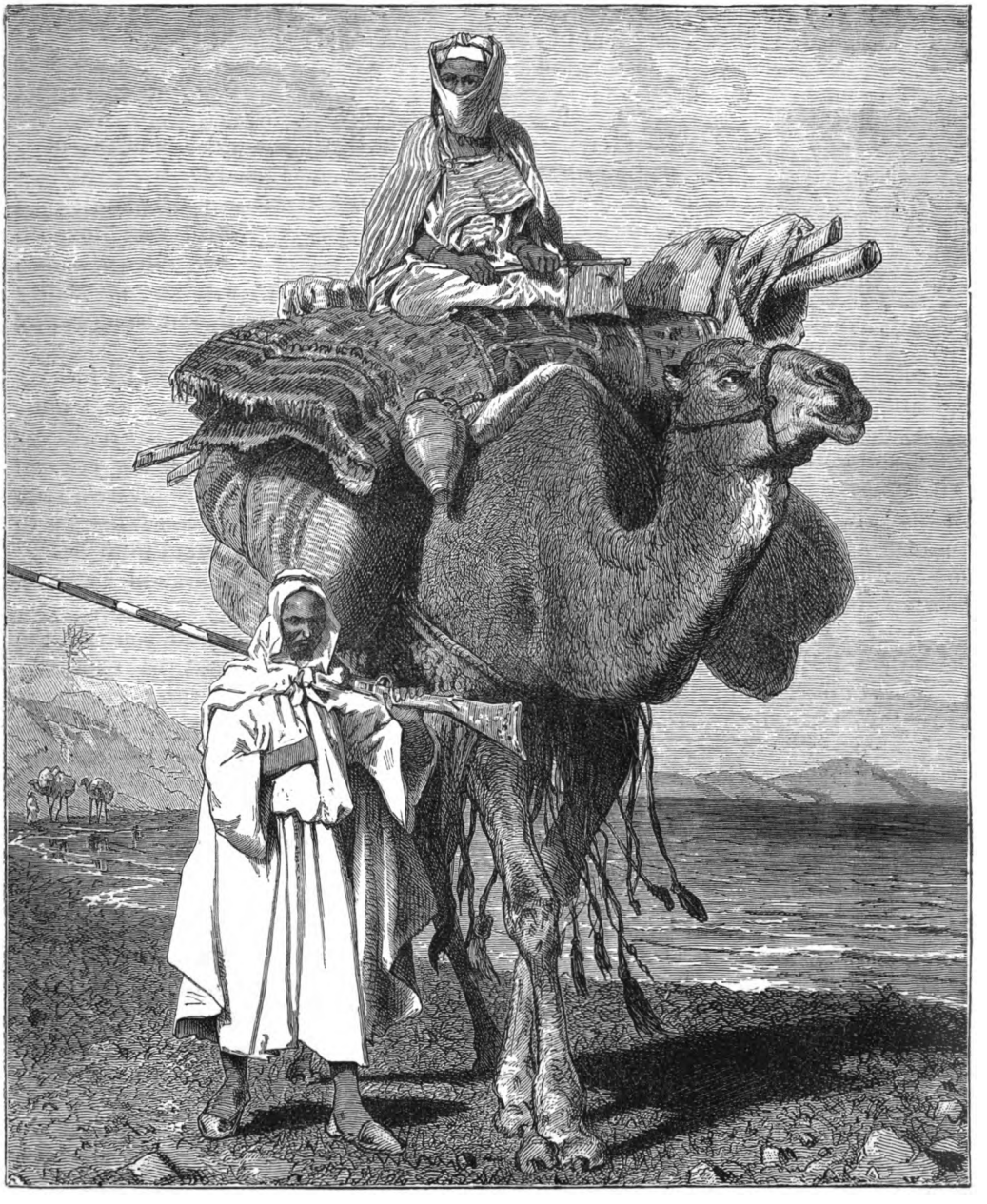
"Well, to make a long story short, Davie soon felt much the same as I did. So we gave up the business, left the place, and settled in a neighbourhood where my husband had relatives who might help us, we thought, into some honest calling. But, though God always supplied our need, we have never abounded in this world's good things. He was minded, you see, to show us that they who would follow Jesus must cheerfully take up the cross and deny themselves. He has taught us, at the same time, that the roughest road with Christ is pleasanter than the smoothest without Him. I would not exchange one hard-working hour of these times for all the pleasures that could be put together, out of all the years of our former abundance.

"But there was still one desire, one little prayer, which used to slip in, like a whisper, between my petitions, and this was that I might see Margaret Mason's face once again, and tell her of the change. I could not afford the journey; so I put it off from year to year, always hoping that the time would come. Now and then I sent her a little token of love, some flower seeds, a silk kerchief, or a few yards of black 'love ribbon.' It was all I could afford; and she never knew from whom it came. I thought I would tell her all when we met. I had managed to save a few shillings, and had fixed to come this very summer, in August. But Margaret's Lord has sent for her, you see, before August. So she never knew, on earth, that her prayers for the pawnbroker's wife had been heard and answered. And yet I think she knows all about it, in that place where 'there is joy over one sinner that repenteth.'"

Here is an instance of what prayer—the "effectual fervent prayer" of the righteous—can do. Reader, have you been taught by God's Holy Spirit to pray? Perhaps you are known as an eminently prayerful Christian, and perhaps for this reason many ask you to "speak their name" before God. Do not refuse to intercede for those who ask you. Is there not in such a case as that narrated encouragement for you to pray for others? And remember, God does not forget the prayers of His people, though He may not immediately answer them. A godly mother prayed all her life for a wicked son, and heard of his conversion on her death-bed!

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# Is there no Hope for Me?



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# Is there no Hope for Me?



If, in looking for eternal life, you are resting on anything in yourself, there is no hope. Take the pains to compare your trust with the Word of God, the unerring rule for a matter of so much sacred interest. A close examination of that Word shows that to rest on any goodness in ourselves as a ground of safety is contrary to the express design of the gospel; it is deceiving ourselves; it is cherishing a fatal mistake: for if this were not a mistake, why should the Son of God have become incarnate? Why should He have lived in sorrow, and died an accursed death? What meaning can there be in His appointing His messengers to preach forgiveness of sins by Him to all the world? What need is there of the earnest invitations to accept salvation as THE GIFT OF GOD? The entire strain of the Old and New Testament is clearly against us, if we seek, or think we have found, any hope in ourselves.

Appealing to the only authority we have on such questions, look carefully at this truth. Examine what the Scriptures teach. Ask yourself, when alone and thoughtful, whether it would be wise to trust in your own heart. If you would only consider calmly what you really are at the best in the sight of Him who searches and knows your heart, you could not help seeing that there is much, very much, in that heart which is offensive to His purity, condemned by His righteousness, rebellious against His authority, utterly inconsistent with that love to Him which ought to be supreme, and as utterly inconsistent with the possibility of obtaining His favour, and being happy in His presence.

You cannot satisfy yourself by looking to yourself; and if so, think what must be your prospects if you have no better hope than this. Do you think you can satisfy God? But it has pleased Him graciously to make Himself known to you, if you give your mind to the study of His Word, and if you draw nigh to Him in prayer.

That Word has also told you that the hopes you cherish must be expressly warranted by His own truth. His truth does not warrant any hope which rests for justification on anything in your own state, or anything in your own thoughts, feelings, purposes, words, or deeds; because, as He judges you, your state is one of alienation from Him, and all that passes in your mind is thereby vitiated. He cannot be satisfied with any hope which does not acknowledge that His law condemns you, which does not gratefully honour His exceeding grace in saving you, which does not look with joyful confidence to that work of our Lord Jesus Christ on which *He* looks with approval and delight, which does not spring up in your heart under the

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guidance and living power of His own Spirit, and which does not bring forth in you the fruits of humility, patience, watchfulness, diligence, charity, and a growing preparation for that world which is to be the home of all His children.

It is for you, reader, to examine your hope in this light. If, when fairly tried, you are obliged to confess that it is not a hope approved by your heavenly Father, it is surely a hope which ought not to content you. If so, let it not beguile you. Be not your own tempter. Suffer not your best interests to perish by leaning on a prop that will surely fail, and will pierce you with disappointment and sorrow when you come to your utmost need.

You have heard of the Arabian traveller through the deserts, who is sometimes cheered by the prospect of what he believes to be a sheet of water, at which he hopes to quench his thirst, but which vanishes at his approach, because it is only the reflection of the sunbeams on the sand. Thus it is that men are cheated by their hopes. They take dreams for realities, fancies for truths, and wander away from safety to the most fearful peril. Oh, search the ground and reason of your hope. Be honest to yourself, faithful to your own soul. Know that your "heart is deceitful," that "the deceitfulness of sin" hardens the heart, and that the deceived and hardened heart is on the borders of perdition. Dare not to commit your eternal happiness to a false hope. "Lean not unto thine own understanding." "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." "Happy is he whose hope is in the Lord his God." "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." "Christ in you the hope of glory." "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

Meditate on these golden sentences. See in them how you are taught to rely, not on anything in yourself, but on that which is in Christ; not on your merit, but on His grace. You are to seek salvation, not by works, but by faith; not through your own strength, but by the Spirit of God. This hope, but none other, will guide you to fountains and palm trees in the desert. This hope will be to you as the light of the morning in your darkness, as the music of heaven to you in your hour of sorrow, the opening of the gates of life on the bed of death. Oh, that this hope may be yours! Then you will never put the troubled question which has torn so many hearts—Is there no hope for me?

The reader of this page may be one whose temptation is not to presumption, but to despondency. You think of your sins, your provocations, your perverted powers, your abused privileges, your wasted opportunities, your wilful abandonment of what you knew to be true, and right, and good, and happy. You shudder as you glance upon the past. The memory of the days which are fled is like a sting of death to you. You know the hardness of your heart; you dread the doom that awaits you. However true the declarations of the gospel may be concerning others, and whatever hope there may be for them, you are disposed to say, not with inquiry, but with the gloom of one who has made up his mind—Is there any hope for me?

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Now, it is most true that there is no hope for you while you continue in such a state of mind as this. You are not believing;—what hope can there be for an unbeliever? You do not repent;—what hope can there be for the unrepenting? But there are three questions suited to your case, two of which may be answered from the Scriptures; the third you must answer for yourself.

One question is, Is there any guilt chargeable against you for which the blood of Christ cannot atone? The scriptural answer to this question is plain and decisive: "By Him all that believe are justified from all things." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." There is no sin of any man which is repented of and forsaken, that may not be pardoned, when mercy is sought in the name of Jesus Christ. He can "save to the uttermost." He is "the propitiation for our sins." His blood is precious: His own language is, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

The next question is, Is there any evil in your heart which the gracious power of the Holy Spirit cannot subdue? To this question the answer of the gospel is equally simple and conclusive. He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." To men who had been sunk in the lowest depths of sin it is said, "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;" and by the self-same Spirit the hearts of men who were dead in all manner of trespasses and sins have been quickened; they have become new creatures in Christ Jesus: "all things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

The final question is, Are you willing, as a repentant sinner, to lay hold of the hope set before you? If not—let this be well pondered—there is no hope for you. As well might Naaman have hoped to be cleansed from his leprosy while he lingered far from Jordan, or the manslayer among the Hebrews to be safe without fleeing to the city of refuge. There is a refuge open to you: you are to flee to it. There is a "hope set before you:" you are urged by the voice of mercy to lay hold of it. Your most serious thoughts urge you to lay hold of it. The assurance of a solemn judgment, and the prospect of eternity, are urging you not to seek comfort in yourself, in your past doings, your present feelings, or your purposes for the future, but only and always to flee for refuge, to "lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus."

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# THE GREAT ADVOCATE



WAITING FOR THE VERDICT.

SOME years ago, a certain town was thrown into great commotion by a daring robbery which had been committed. The thieves were pursued and taken, and the whole gang was broken up. All were committed to prison, to await their trial at the next assizes. As the time approached,

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great was the anxiety of those who were interested in the fate of the prisoners.

The father of one was a respectable tradesman. His own credit was at stake. He spared no expense in procuring the best counsel he could hear of for his unhappy son. True, it was a desperate case. Few would come forward to speak in the young man's behalf. But still the father's hopes were strong, because he secured an advocate who was known to be very skilful, and had been so successful in other cases, that much was to be hoped for from him.

Another parent was a poor widow. She was greatly cast down; her son was likely to be transported for life, and who was to plead for him? she could not afford to pay a counsellor. Yet her necessity only made her the more earnest; and she was to be seen early and late, begging the contributions of any who might pity *her* case, if not her son's, that she might get some one to plead for him who so greatly needed an advocate.

There was one among the criminals, a ringleader—a bold, stout-hearted fellow, who boasted that he wanted no help—that he meant to plead for himself. Offers of help were made; but they were proudly refused. This man intended to be his own advocate.

The character of a fourth was entirely lost. He had lived in a course of crime, and his guilt was so clear, there was no hope for him. No one would stand his friend. This man had no advocate.

Now let us turn from thinking of the condition of these unhappy men before the earthly bar to which they would shortly be called, to meditate on the state of sinners, called to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

In the case of the prisoners, their deliverance was thought to depend very much upon the advocate employed in their behalf.

And how strikingly is this the case with sinners against God! To them an Advocate is recommended, who is willing to undertake the worst possible case committed to His care; who will go through His undertaking to the end; and in whose hands no cause ever yet failed.

Whether you wish to hear any more about this Advocate will depend upon whether you feel your want of Him, or not. The prisoners would not have cared about an advocate if they had not known themselves to be in danger. So neither will you, unless you feel and know yourself to be overtaken by Divine justice—a criminal, having no excuse to offer, awaiting the day of trial, and uncertain what the end may be.

*Is* this your case? Or do you flatter yourself that you are not so bad as all this,—that, far from deserving to be put on a level with the thief about to be tried for his life, you have done nothing to merit wrath and condemnation—have been better than many—or, at all events, though you may be a sinner, as all are, you put your trust in God's mercy? Hear God's own words on this subject: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."[1] "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Learn then to listen to God's truth, and not to Satan's lies, or to your own vain hopes and wishes, and you will at once see that, as a sinner

[1] Ezek. xviii. 4.

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—which you do not attempt to deny that you are—you do deserve wrath and condemnation, and that your trust in the mercy of God may prove a vain trust, if you do not seek this mercy in the only way which the Bible points out to you. If you will only believe God's Word, you will see that you want an advocate to plead for you, and that you must be lost without one.

But if you have been brought to see your guilt, your danger, your hopeless, helpless condition—shut up under condemnation, and exposed to the tremendous wrath of God against sin, then how gladly will you welcome the news of an Advocate—one who will feel for you, and to whom you may safely trust your cause!

Who is this Advocate? Where is such an one to be found? He is no other than the Son of God; Jesus Christ, the almighty, all-sufficient Saviour. To recommend Him to you, consider a few of His qualifications. He has shown Himself ready to take up the worst possible case. You will remember that, among the prisoners just mentioned, was one whose character was so lost, that no one could be found to plead for him. But it is not so with your great Advocate. Jesus pleads the most desperate case, if only it be humbly, and wholly trusted to Him.

Again; when a counsel pleads for a prisoner, he tries to make the best of his case. He offers all the excuses he can think of. He tries to excite the pity of his judges; and sometimes succeeds so well, as to melt the hearts of the very enemies of the prisoners, even against their better judgment.

But our great Advocate proceeds in a very different way. He offers no excuses for the sinner; for that would be to lessen the strict justice and holiness of His own law. He pleads—but not the sinner's innocence, or his former good conduct, or his present penitence and tears. No! He pleads His own work in the sinner's behalf. He came down from heaven, and became man; that, *as* man, He might fulfil the law which man had broken; and, as man, might suffer the punishment which man had deserved. This was the work which He undertook, and which He actually accomplished; and now, having ascended into heaven, His work is still carried on. "He ever liveth to make intercession." This, then, is His plea—His own righteousness. And this is what the apostle John declares: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins."

Again, the earthly advocate is not to be obtained without a cost in proportion to his worth. This was made clear in the case of two of the prisoners referred to. The tradesman succeeded in obtaining an advocate, because he could afford to pay for it. The poor widow had nothing to pay; and, unless her friends would help her, she must be deprived of the benefit.

But with our great Advocate it is far otherwise. He offers His help freely, without money and without price. "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." [1]

Do you ask, How shall I obtain the help of this Advocate? The answer is, *Believe.* Take Him at His word; "Him

[1] Psa. lxxii. 12.

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that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."[1] Go, then, to Him, just as you are. Make no excuses. Do not try to make out a good case; but tell Him all. And throw yourself at once upon His work, His righteousness, as your plea; and upon His willingness to plead them in your behalf. If you attempt to mix up any pleas of your own, you mar His work; He must do all.

But sometimes it happens that the counsel employed against the prisoner is much more powerful than the one who is engaged for him. Now, in the sinner's case, it is indeed true, that there is everything to be said against him; and all can be fully proved. His accuser is powerful, crafty, and unceasing in his efforts. He never loses an advantage. He has plenty of witnesses to bring against the sinner—plenty of crimes to lay to his charge. But the great Advocate is able to answer every accusation brought against the redeemed of the Lord. In Christ the broken law is fulfilled, justice is satisfied; they have that righteousness which is "upon all them that believe," and they are thus completely accepted and restored to favour.

[1] John vi. 37.

Now have you understood these things? Do you feel concerned in this subject? Do you believe that it is a matter of the greatest importance to you—even a matter of eternal life, or eternal death? If so, you will not lose a day, nor an hour, in seeking to obtain the all-powerful advocacy of Jesus. You will not be like the man who stoutly and proudly refused all offers of help, and determined to plead his own cause. It might do for *him* before an earthly judge; but it will not do for you, or anyone, before the Judge eternal. No; at that judgment-seat at which we must all appear, every mouth will be stopped, and all will be brought in guilty before God.[1] And whatever people may talk now of their good lives and their good meanings, and their honesty, and their charity, they will be speechless then, when God shall bring to light the hidden secrets of the heart.

Therefore, go to Jesus now,—humbly throw yourselves upon His infinite grace, wisdom, and willingness; and you shall find, to your everlasting comfort, that "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."[2]

[1] Rom. iii. 19. [2] Rom. viii. 1.

He lives! the great Redeemer lives!
What joy the blest assurance gives!
He lives, He lives, who once was dead;
He lives, my everlasting Head.
He lives to bless me with His love,
And still He pleads for me above;
He lives to raise me from the grave,
And me eternally to save.

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# SELF-WRECKED.




AMONGST THE GAMBLERS.

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# SELF-WRECKED.



BOUT the year 1815, at New York a wealthy merchant and his wife took charge of an interesting orphan boy. As they had no children, they adopted the little stranger as their own. He continually gained on their affections, and was looked upon as the rich man's heir. Gifted with fine talents and an active spirit, everything gave promise of a brilliant future.

The youth was in due time sent to college. Here he fell into the company of some dissolute young men, and soon became as wicked as the worst. Friends advised, and tutors admonished him, but in vain. A rage for gambling, and a love of drinking, became besetting sins; and at length, instead of returning home with honours, he was expelled from college in disgrace.

Leaving the house of his benefactor, he became a wanderer in Europe. One morning, the American ambassador at St. Petersburg heard that one of his fellow-countrymen was liable to punishment for a drunken riot. He sent in time to save the prodigal from prison, and through the ambassador's influence he was set at liberty, and enabled to return to America.

The first to welcome him, on his landing, was his early friend, the merchant, who took the wanderer again to his quiet home. The young man expressing a wish to become a soldier, interest was made with the proper authorities, and he was admitted into the military academy. For a short time all went on well. He was looked upon by the professors as one of their most promising pupils. But, alas! he yielded to the influence of his former habits, drank to excess, disobeyed orders, and was once more turned on the world.

Again his kind foster-father opened his doors to receive him. There were the same promise and hope of amendment as before, but the same yielding to sin, and the same fearful results followed. The dissipated youth again parted from the merchant in anger, to meet him no more on earth.

Now thrown on his own resources by his misconduct, he directed his attention to writing for the press. Several poetical and prose pieces in the magazines were well received. But his evil habits resumed their sway, and, in despair, he enlisted as a private soldier. The officers, some of whom had been his companions in the military academy, pitied his state, and obtained a commission for him; but just as friends began to rally round him, under the influence of his sinful propensities he deserted.

In 1833, the proprietors of a magazine offered two prizes, one for the best poem, and the second for the best tale, which should be found suitable to their pages. Numerous manuscripts were sent in; and the judges decided that two manuscripts were worthy of the prizes. These were found to have been written by the same individual. He was sent for to receive his reward. On his entering the pub-

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lisher's office, his whole exterior manifested dissipation, want, and illness. But his manner was that of a scholar, and so interested the publishers, that they offered him literary employment. A little money well applied soon changed his appearance, and in a short time he took his place as an editor, with the means and position of a gentleman.

For a little while all went on well, and those who knew him began to think that there was indeed a happy change in his life. He was successful and admired in his new labours. As all was prosperous, he resolved to have a home of his own, and he married a worthy young woman. But sinful human nature again failed; his good resolutions had been made without prayer to God, and without trust in Christ; his heart was yet unchanged. The young husband fell back again into his old sins, lost the respect of his employers, and was dismissed from his situation.

How often is it seen that an evil course, begun in early life, is continued, with a few fitful intervals, to its close. A man who has entered on the ways of sin may be one hour overcome by remorse; the next plunged into vice: now checked by a sense of shame, and the stings of conscience, and then vows and resolutions are cast aside and forgotten. Thus he pursues a downward course. He finds that it is in the nature of one sinful compliance to lead to another. He has put himself into the hands of an unrelenting enemy, who exacts constant service. At length he is "holden with the cords of his sin;" his fetters are made fast. His depraved desires become stronger as they are indulged: every fresh act of sin only increases the cravings and prepares the way for another commission of it. But like a straw drawn into a whirlpool, every fresh eddy, which gives to it greater force, lessens the hope of rescue.

Such was the case with the unhappy subject of this narrative. He passed from the editorship of one magazine to that of another. He journeyed from city to city—known everywhere as a talented young man, but as one who was easily overcome by his love of drink. Wife and friends appealed to his better feelings; publishers sought to influence him by urging the effects of his conduct on his character, position, and prospects. Now, for a time, he seemed to obtain the mastery over his sins, and then shortly after, his little family was reduced to want by his disgraceful habits. At one period he would soberly project works which secured admiration for his talents and learning; then they were broken off by his irregular practices, and only a single occasional paper was written to meet the pressing claims of the hour. Overcome by poverty and neglect, his wife failed in health, and died a broken-hearted woman.

The melancholy record of his life was soon to close. He was in some small degree once more restored for a season from his habits, and was engaged in delivering lectures in different towns. They were well attended, and it was with something like renewed confidence that the well-wishers of the lecturer watched his conduct. His friends began again to receive him into their houses. At one of these he met with a lady whom he had formerly known. Considering him a reformed man, she consented to an offer of marriage. Everything seemed to promise well—the

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dawn of a better day, it was thought, had appeared.

On a sunny afternoon in October, 1849, he set out for New York, to fulfil a literary engagement, and to arrange for his marriage. He arrived at Baltimore, where he gave his luggage to a porter, with directions to convey it to the railway station. In an hour he proposed to pursue his journey. But he thought he would just take a glass before he started, for refreshment—that was all. Fatal intention! In the tavern he met with some former companions, who invited him to join them. In a moment all his good resolutions—duty, honour, bride, were forgotten, and before the night had well come on he was in a state of prostrate drunkenness. As the immediate effects of the liquor passed away, it was evident that his mind had lost its power. All attempts to rally him were in vain. He was taken to the hospital, and on the night of Sunday, the 7th of October, he died a raving madman. He was only thirty-eight years old when the last dreadful incident in his sad history took place.

Reader: this is no fiction. No single circumstance is here recorded but happened to one of the most popular and talented writers of America. Nor, in giving this account, has any unnecessary exposure of human frailty been made. Those who knew him well have published the melancholy story: it is left for you to apply its moral to your hearts.

Make a personal application of this narrative. Inquire in all faithfulness if sin holds you in its power. It matters little what form of sin it may be—whether it be of a vicious character, or such as may not bring you under the censure of your fellow men—whatever it be, it is the enemy of your soul.

Arouse yourself to ponder the peril of your state, and the folly and guilt of a life spent in sin: "Cease to do evil; learn to do well." Resolve to "break off your sins by righteousness;" to "watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation;" to maintain the conflict against all evil; to "repent, and turn yourself from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin."

But your hope must be in God. We have seen how powerless in themselves are education, talent, taste, convictions, vows. In the gospel alone the true remedy is to be found. It proclaims deliverance from the guilt and power of sin. It makes known the atoning sacrifice of Christ, to take away your guilt, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, to subdue the power of sin. In the exercise of faith in that Saviour you will find pardon and peace. By earnest prayer you will receive the aid of the Holy Spirit, to renew and cleanse your heart, and to enable you to overcome every evil passion. To you the invitation of the loving Saviour is addressed: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." To you the promise is given, that if you ask for the Holy Spirit you shall receive. But if the invitation be rejected, and the promise slighted, you will find, when it is too late, that you are SELF-WRECKED for ever.

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# The Terrified Judge.



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# The Terrified Judge.



BOUT eighteen hundred years ago, an old man was brought to a town called Cæsarea as a criminal, to be tried before the Roman governor. He was charged with being a "pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world;" "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes;" and a profaner of the Temple. He defended himself, however, in so simple, and yet so forcible a manner, that the governor put off his accusers, and declined giving a decision until he had learned the full particulars of the matter. In the meantime the governor commanded an officer to keep the accused, and let him have liberty, and not forbid his acquaintance to come to him. He also used the opportunity to converse with the prisoner on the great question between him and his countrymen, and to hear him speak concerning the faith in Christ. Thus the captive and the judge often met face to face.

Most striking is the contrast between the position of the two, and most marked the difference in their respective circumstances; yet the prisoner has in every respect the advantage; and while he speaks more like the judge, the judge listens rather like the criminal. The one, with all the boldness of a man who feels his cause to be righteous, lifts up his voice, and proclaims the fearful nature of sin; the other, with all the timidity of a man who knows himself to be wicked, shrinks back from the faithful denunciation of his guilt. The prisoner is Paul, the governor is Felix. This Felix was disgraced by many crimes and vices, and in the conduct of the government was oppressive and cruel. Drusilla, who is called his wife, lived with him in adultery; for her former husband was still alive. Before these two persons, the cruel and licentious Felix, and the wicked Drusilla, stands the apostle of the Gentiles, a lowly prisoner before their lofty tribunal.

And what is the nature of the address which he makes before them? Does he seek to advance his own interest by praise and flattery? Does he try to soothe the prejudices, or gratify the pride of his hearers? Does he avoid all subjects but those which he knows will be pleasing to the avaricious governor and his guilty wife? Nothing of the sort. He spoke on subjects which were anything but pleasing to Felix and Drusilla, for he rebuked their crimes, and set before them the certain condemnation which shall be adjudged to sin. "He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." And as he reasoned thus, "Felix trembled," and with a conscience stung by a sense of guilt, was compelled to cry out, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

"Felix trembled!" What a testimony to the force and power of truth! The judge actually alarmed in the presence of his prisoner, simply because the latter

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appealed to that conscience which is in every man's heart, and which, however long it be kept asleep, is sure to awake some day or other, and to strike with a terrible fear. "Righteousness, temperance, judgment to come;" was there anything in these subjects to appal the soul of the governor and his wife? Yes, much—much in them to cause every sinner to tremble and be alarmed.

"Righteousness;" what is this? It is what Felix had not, and what Drusilla had not. "Righteousness" is uprightness, purity of purpose, and honesty of practice. It is the outward manifestation of the holiness which dwells within. It works towards God by love, by faith, by obedience; and towards man by charity, by integrity, by forbearance. It is opposed to all evil in the heart, and to all sinfulness in the life. It is one of the "fruits of the Spirit;" for as by nature "there are none righteous," it is only when a man is "born again," that he can practise that righteousness which is required to prevail in all who would enter into the kingdom of heaven. For though it is true that we are pardoned and freely justified "by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves: it is the gift of God;" yet it is also true that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The title to heaven is freely given to us because of the obedience and death of Christ; the meetness for heaven is wrought in us through the agency and power of the Holy Ghost. What says the apostle Paul? "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Did not Christ come to save us from the power of sin? Yes, for it is solemnly declared that "the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men." No marvel, then, that "Felix trembled" when Paul "reasoned of righteousness," for he knew that he was living in unrighteousness; and, worse, he felt that he could not bring himself to abandon sin, because he was one who "loved darkness rather than light, because his deeds were evil." And well may every sinner who clings to his sin tremble as he thinks of his own unrighteousness.

But the apostle reasoned of temperance; and what is "temperance?" It is restraining the wrong use of the appetites and passions of our nature either in act or purpose. For the gospel not only condemns the guilty act, but it tells us that there may be murder in a thought, and adultery in a look. There is the utmost need that the corrupt desires of the mind be mortified and denied, that all carnal affections be crucified, that all the evil desires of the flesh and of the mind be subdued and overcome.

But the apostle reasoned also of a "judgment to come." He spoke to Felix of a day in the which "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." He told him of an hour when the proud shall no longer boast, nor the poor complain; when the wicked shall no longer triumph, nor the righteous be put to confusion. And as he set before the Roman governor the nature of the judgment, the strict account to be rendered in to God, and the misery which shall be the portion of the wicked, "Felix

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trembled." Heathen as he was, he could not keep down the voice of conscience; and his guilty soul was shaken by fears of the "wrath to come." He might well "tremble;" and so may every one who has not "fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before him." Is there not something to make you afraid in the thought that God "hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained?" "The dead, small and great," shall "stand before God;" and *you* shall take your place before the "great white throne." And then, if your sins be not blotted out through the blood of Jesus, they shall be brought into judgment; sins of the heart, sins of the life, sins of thought, and word, and deed. Those falsehoods, those frauds, those unholy passions, those wicked actions, those angry feelings, those sinful indulgences, Sabbath-breaking, and profaneness, and dishonesty—all of which shall meet you at the judgment and overwhelm you with despair. For every man shall reap what he sows; "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." How terrible to think that all your sins will be laid bare before the Judge; and that anguish, and tribulation, and wrath await every soul of man that doeth evil. Truly you may well "tremble" at the thought. You know the sentence to be passed on the sinner by the Son of man: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." Yes, the lips which once said, "Come unto Me," shall say, "Depart from Me." Oh that you might "tremble" now, and that this trembling would lead you to repentance! Be not like Felix, who "trembled" and trifled; putting off to "a more convenient season" the duty of attending to the "things which belonged to his peace." Do not let your fear be like that of devils, who "believe and tremble," but can never draw near in love to God; rather pray for a fear than shall be filial, working in you a holy dread of God's displeasure, and urging you to "flee from the wrath to come."

Oh, come then to Christ for pardon, for peace, for eternal life. Let His great love in dying for your sins constrain you to believe in Him and to love Him in return. Pray for His Holy Spirit to "shed abroad the love of God in your heart;" and then, instead of trembling at the thought of God, and of eternity, and the judgment, you will have a holy trust in the Lord; and instead of being galled by the "spirit of bondage again to fear," you will rejoice in having that "spirit of adoption," whereby you can cry, "Abba, Father!" Oh, think of the blessedness of having a hope which "maketh not ashamed!" Think of the happiness of having peace with God through the obedience and death of His dear Son! No fear, no trembling, no dread. Instead thereof, love and peace and confidence: for "old things are passed away; all things are become new," and "joy and gladness" are found in the heart which trusts in Christ, "thanksgiving also, and the voice of melody.'

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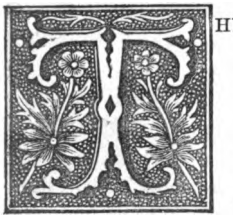
# INDECISION FOR RIGHT.



LARGE WAVES BROKE UPON THE ROCKS WITH A HOLLOW SOUND.

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# Indecision for Right.



The setting sun shone brightly upon a large inland lake, and the clouds were driven on rapidly by a strong wind, which shook the boughs of the sturdy trees that grew down to the edge of the water. Large waves broke upon the rocks with a hoarse and hollow sound, and the evening threatened to be wild and stormy; for as it closed in, the sky grew of a blacker hue, distant thunder was heard, and vivid flashes of lightning rent the dark and heavy masses of gathering clouds.

The heavy gusts of wind shook the doors and windows of a cottage which stood a little way from the lake, among a clump of tall trees whose branches bent and bowed as if they would give way under the violence of the storm. Within the house all looked bright and cheerful; a fire burned pleasantly on the hearth, and the light gleamed on the faces of a small group seated near the blazing logs of wood, and conversing quietly together. This group consisted of a widow and her children, a young girl and a boy about ten years of age. Close to the window, and looking anxiously out, stood a youth of about twenty, strongly built, and of a fine manly countenance. There was something of impatience and disappointment in his face, and his hand played upon the window-sill with a quick and restless motion.

"Come here, William, and sit down by me; and give up all thoughts of going out to night," said his mother, in a gentle, pleading tone. "Come," said she again as the youth returned no answer; "and Jane will get supper ready; and Richard will help you to mend the nets for to-morrow night, when the storm will have blown over." But the young man heard not, or did not heed; he continued to look out into the dark night, and seemed wholly taken up with the wild scene.

"Dear William," said his sister, coming to him, and taking his hand, "you will make yourself happy this evening at home; after all, it is only a little disappointment, and they will not expect you at the Frythe when the storm is so high."

"There will shortly be a lull," he replied; "even now the clouds appear lighter: if I do not go to-night, I shall miss the sport in the morning; and you know I am to meet several friends."

"But you will never think of running such a risk, as to venture upon the lake in so fearful a night," answered his sister.

"Oh, I do not mind that; let the wind go down a little, and I have no fear. I have been often on the lake when the water was as rough and the sky as dark as it is now. Besides, the moon will rise soon."

"You must not go, my boy, indeed you must not," said his mother, who came up as he uttered the last words. "You will not disobey me; I am sure you will not."

"But, my dear mother, you need not fear; the clouds are breaking, and yonder is the moon; there will be plenty of

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light, and half-an-hour's pull will carry me to the other side."

The widow laid her hand upon her son's arm, and leaning her head upon his shoulder, said, while the tears gathered in her eyes, "You know, William, how much reason I have—*we* have—to dread that lake. It was on just such a night as this that a sudden storm overtook your father as he was laying his nets; and though two men were with him in the boat, they could not save her;—they were all drowned." "Drowned," she repeated, with a quivering voice; "and if you were—were"—she could not finish the sentence, but, covering her face with her hands, wept silently.

By this time Richard had joined the group at the window, and taking his brother's hand in both of his, begged him, for his mother's sake, to come and sit down quietly, and make them all happy. The youth was touched; turning round, he kissed his mother, and led her gently to her chair at the fire, saying that he would not go if the storm continued so wild. He was, indeed, "almost persuaded" by their united entreaties to give up wholly the thought of his expedition.

Hardly were they seated, when a knock was heard at the door; and, on its being opened, a young man about William's age entered, and asked him what he meant to do. "Nothing shall prevent *me*," he said. "I expect rare fun in the morning, and would not miss it for the world."

"William," said his mother, "has already promised to stay with me; and I hope you will be wise, Edward, and remain at home."

"Oh, he is afraid, is he?" said Edward, with a laugh. "He promised me that no mother should prevent his going; but if he likes better to stay, why, I shall face the storm alone."

William coloured, and said a few words in a hurried voice about his not wishing to "give his mother any anxiety."

"Oh, it is always the case," said the last comer; "when we have not the courage to do a thing, we shift the blame to some other shoulders; the coward has ever a ready excuse at his command."

William was on his feet in a moment. "Coward! No, that I am not. Who ever saw me afraid? My mother had almost persuaded me to remain with her, because she said my going would keep her anxious. But if you venture, Edward, I will not stay behind. Wait one moment, and I shall be ready to set out."

It was in vain that his mother besought him not to go; that she commanded him to remain at home; that his sister added her entreaties. The youth was resolved on following his own wayward will, and though he had some misgivings as he saw his mother's sorrow, yet after a few preparations he hurried from the cottage with his friend.

The storm was a little abated, though the wind still rushed in angry gusts through the trees, and by the faint beams of the moon, which broke at intervals through the clouds, the white foam was seen cresting the big waves which were driven upon the shore. The young men put out their boat. A last cry came from the weeping woman who stood at the cottage-door, "William, William!" but it did not reach the strand—it was drowned in the noise of the storm.

It was never known how long the two

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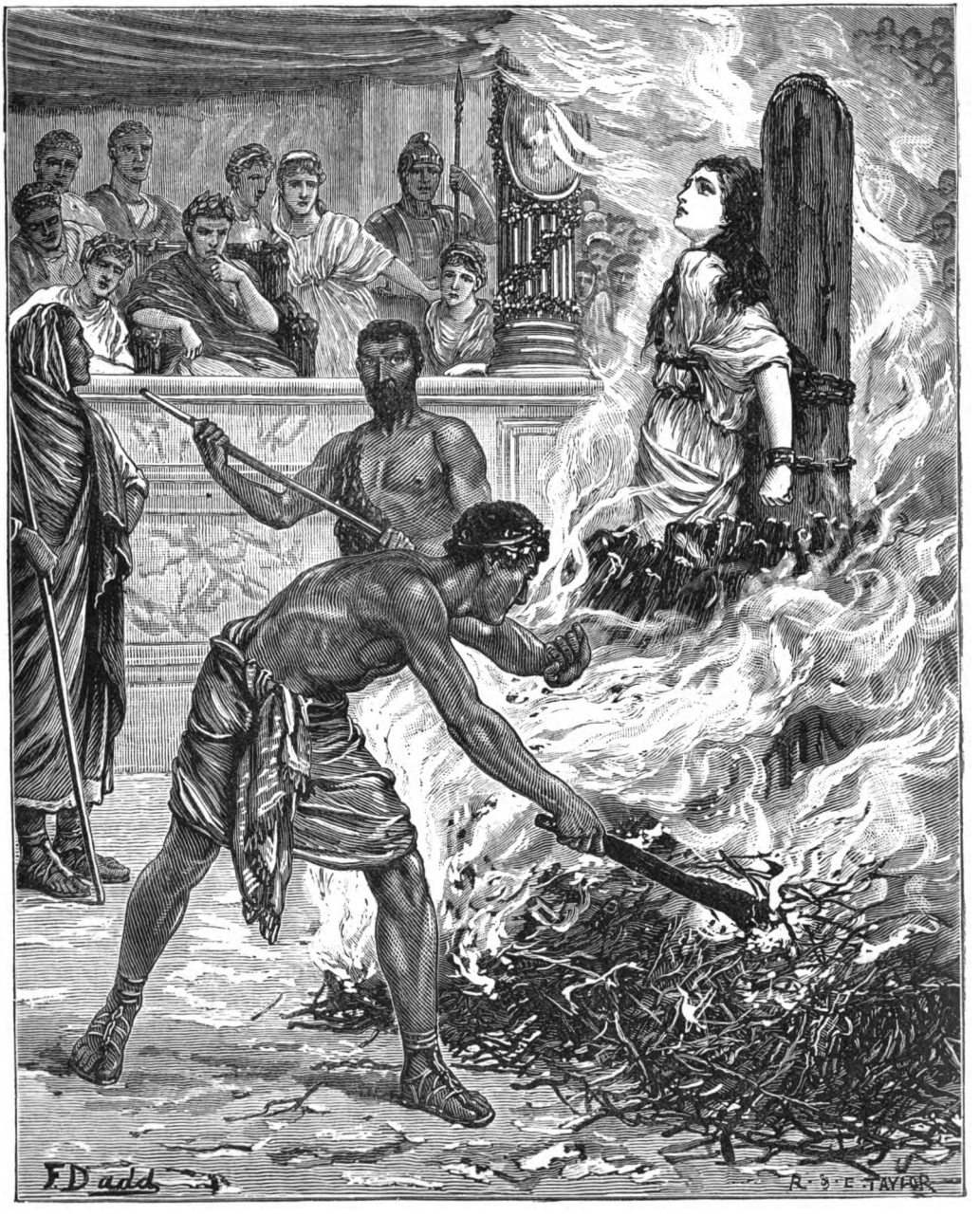
youths battled with the elements; how near they got to the opposite shore; what were their feelings as they found themselves mastered by the wind and the waves; or what bitter anguish for their rashness took possession of their souls. Thoughts of those at home—the mother, the sister, the brother, may have come upon them reproachfully; vain regrets for their imprudence; wild longing that they had listened to the pleadings of affection may have been busy at their hearts as they found themselves about to sink into a watery grave. Their bodies were washed ashore the next morning, and the voice of "mourning, lamentation, and woe," was heard in their homes.

How many are there in the world like William—who are "almost persuaded" to follow that course of action which they feel to be right! We read of one in ancient days who was "almost persuaded to be a Christian," but not being "altogether persuaded" was hopelessly lost. There is nothing, perhaps, in regard to religion, more often fatal than this "halting between two opinions."

Reader, how is it with you? Do you confess that "one thing is needful," and yet do you neglect it? Do you approve the right, and yet follow the wrong? Do you acknowledge that religion has the first claim, and yet do you allow the world to stand between you and God? When God is calling you to Himself, when the Saviour is pleading with you, and the Spirit is striving with you, are you turning a deaf ear to their voice, and following the desires of your own heart? Are you braving the storm of God's wrath, though He would fain save you from its fury? Are you quieting your conscience by some half-formed resolution; by putting off to a more convenient season the giving attention to those things which belong to your peace? Hesitate no longer between the world and God. You are called now to choose between them. Eternal issues hang upon your choice—God or the world, time or eternity, which shall it be? Beware! The storm of the Almighty's wrath shall surely arise, and overwhelm every transgressor. "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him." The sea and the waves shall roar; the sun be darkened in the heavens, the moon turned into blood, and the stars fall from their spheres. You will founder in this storm; you will make shipwreck, if you do not take refuge in the haven of a Saviour's love. His blood to cleanse you; His Spirit to sanctify you—these you must have, or you will perish miserably and for ever. Then turn unto the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul. Do not rest satisfied with being "almost persuaded to be a Christian," but be altogether persuaded. Oh, think that to be "*almost saved* is to be *altogether lost.*" Ask, therefore, for the Holy Spirit, that you may believe in Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

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# "Give Me Thine Heart."




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# "Give Me Thine Heart."

An early Christian writer states that Julitta, a pious lady possessed of wealth, was required, under the penalty of losing her property and life, to offer incense to idols. Hearing the impious decision, and supported by her Lord, she exclaimed, "Farewell, riches; welcome, poverty! Farewell, life; welcome, death! All that I have, were it a thousand times more, would I lose rather than speak one wicked word against God my Creator. I yield Thee most hearty thanks, O my God, for this gift of grace, that I can despise this frail and transitory world, esteeming the possession of Christ above all treasures." To any question after this, her answer was, "I am the servant of Jesus Christ." She welcomed a sentence that doomed her to the flames, and when committed to them her words and looks declared the joy that filled her heart. Doubtless this devoted but happy sufferer found in her Saviour a rich compensation for all she sacrificed. She had given her heart to God, and God still demands the heart.

This is required for God by the first and great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind."[1] This commandment is binding on all on earth, and all in heaven. No intelligent being can be exempt from obligation to love his Creator, and no child of man, from still weightier obligation, to love the Divine Redeemer.

Think of the gift required. Not lifeless forms, or outward offerings merely, the wealth of the rich, or the estates of the noble, the honours of philosophers, or the crowns of kings. All these, if you could give them, would, if offered alone, be mean and contemptible in the view of God. "Give me thine heart." The heart often signifies the affections. Give these to Christ, yield yourself to God, acknowledge His right to you. Say, "Lord, here take the purchase of Thy death; I am for ever Thine. Thou didst die to ransom me from debasing servitude to sin and Satan, and from the horrors of eternal death. Now take me, and all I am, and all I have; for Thou hast a right to all. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Thus present to God the sacrifice He loves, "a broken and a contrite heart," a heart in which Christ may dwell.

By many this offering is withheld from God; by the open sinner—his heart is full of evil and given to vanity; by the merely moral—he shuns the open vices of some, but gives not his heart to God; by the undecided—in them there may be much that has the semblance of piety, but here is their great want—the heart is not given to the Lord. Like them are they

[1] Luke x. 27.

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who take up the profession of religion, but give not their hearts to Christ; and hence the many inconsistencies that prove their religion to be vain.

Traveller to eternity! consider *for* whom and *by* whom this gift is demanded. The claim on thy heart is made for God, the infinite, the blessed, the high and lofty One, whose love would bless, but whose frown would undo you for ever. His favour is life, His anger is death, and worse than death. A dying sinner said, "O Thou blasphemed, yet most indulgent Lord God, hell itself is a refuge, if it hide me from Thy frown!" Give Him thy heart. It will not be to a feeble friend, for He is the Almighty God; nor to a poor one, for all the wealth of heaven is His. He has blessed many that have made the offering; He can love, and save, and bless you. Him you must shortly meet, and appear as a disembodied spirit in His awful presence. Would you be blessed then, give now thy heart to God.

Present the offering to the Lord Jesus, who appeared as "God manifest in the flesh." How many are His claims and excellences! He is the only Saviour. His love was so vast, that it brought Him from the throne of the heavenly glory to the cross of deepest woe. His grace is so wonderful, that He will cast out none that come to Him;[1] His bitterest foes, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, may, by repentance and faith, find a place among His happy friends, and the guilt of twice ten thousand sins be thus washed away in a moment. He would be to thee all that a lost sinner, with an immortal soul, can want. He can save to the uttermost; has saved many, and would save thee. He is an everlasting Friend. They that are accepted in Him may joyfully exclaim, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?—Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Oh, give Him now thy heart, believe in Him, trust Him, love Him, and He Himself will be thy refuge then!

Not only is this gift requested for Him, but, stranger still, it is requested by Him. He invites the offering when He bids all the heavy-laden come to Him, and promises to give them rest. With condescension still more wonderful, the blessed God beseeches you to take Him for your friend: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though *God did beseech* you by us: we pray you *in Christ's stead*, be ye reconciled to God." Amazing words of heavenly mercy! God, as it were, a suppliant to wretched rebel man, intreating him to lay aside his enmity, to welcome salvation and be blessed.

Undone immortal! God desires thy happiness when He says, "Give Me thine heart." Vain, where eternity is concerned, is everything short of the surrender of the heart to God. An accomplished young lady supposed to be pious, though she made no open profession of religion, was taken ill, and death seemed near. A minister of the gospel went to her sick chamber, expecting to find her possessed of peace and hope; but to his surprise he saw her countenance expressing agony of mind. "I am glad," said she, "you are come; I cannot bear to go out of the world a deceiver; but I am unable to tell

[1] John vi. 37.

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the sad secret of my heart to those about me; it would be too much for them to bear. Ah, what have I to undergo? I am not religious; I have talked about religion; my passions have often felt the powers of the world to come, but, amidst all, my own heart has never loved religion as a personal thing. Indeed, I have never concerned myself about it for myself, and now I must die without any of its prospects, and be for ever shut out from any of its enjoyments. Is not this wretchedness?" The minister urged on her to confess her sins, and even then to seek mercy by believing in Christ, trusting wholly to Him. "No, sir," she replied, "spare me, spare yourself; my character is finished. What I am, that I shall be for ever. The tree is even now falling. It is too late to direct the point to which its trunk shall be extended on the earth." Thus, full of despair, she died.

Reader, as you would avoid such wretchedness, give your heart to Christ. There is but the alternative before you of giving or refusing your heart to Him. Give, and yield to the strongest claims of the blessed God and gracious Saviour. Refuse, and you trample on them all. Give, and you take the course which God, and Christ, and angels, and perfected saints, and dying Christians, and even dying sinners, approve. Refuse, and you take the course which pleases Satan and those who are led captive by him. Give, and obtain all spiritual blessings in Christ—pardon, peace, adoption, and blissful hope. Refuse, and you live and die accursed, without peace, without God, without Christ, without hope. Give, and travel to heaven, and secure in Christ a mansion there. Refuse, and you spend a life of base rebellion and vile ingratitude towards a heavenly Friend, and of cruel madness to your own soul. In short, comply, and be for ever blessed. Refuse, and you will be for ever lost.

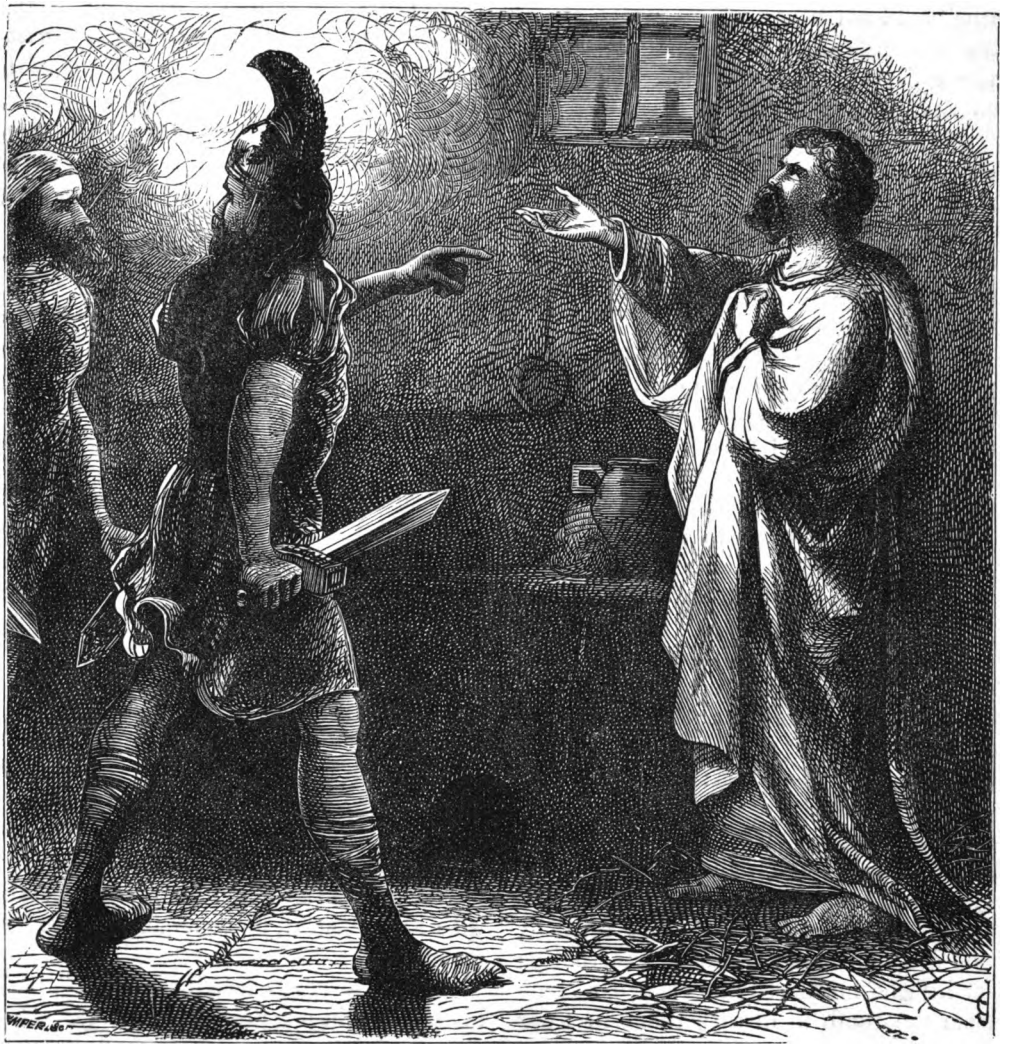
The matter comes to this point, you must give or refuse. No half-giving will avail. Indecision is refusal. Delay is refusal. Why should you delay? Is Satan so good a master that you should be loth to leave his service? Can you find a better friend than God? Can you find another Saviour than Christ? Now pray, resolve, decide, ask the Holy Spirit's help, without which no one ever gave the heart to God. Fall on your knees before the mercy-seat, and vow to the Lord of all, "This heart is Thine; O Lord, it shall be Thine." "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed." "Choose you this day whom ye will serve:—As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."[1]

[1] Josh. xxiv. 15.

O Lord, Thy heavenly grace impart,
And fix my frail inconstant heart;
Henceforth my chief desire shall be,
To dedicate myself to Thee.

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# "Exceeding Sorry—yet."



THE EXECUTIONER BEHEADED JOHN IN THE PRISON.

"Exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her." Such was a king's excuse for a murder.

John the Baptist had boldly rebuked Herod, because he had married his brother Philip's wife. "It is not lawful for thee," said the preacher of repentance, "to have

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thy brother's wife." Herodias was of course angry at this plainness of speech. She could not bear to have her position and interests so threatened, and, perhaps, the guilt which lay on her conscience so rudely touched; and therefore she would fain have put to death this faithful reprover of her sins. The grave would silence, she might think, at once and for ever, this too stern and austere man who dared to denounce her unhallowed passion, and would not allow her to go on contentedly in crime.

But, though Herodias was thus without scruple, "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." The king, therefore, instead of going on at once to a direct deed of blood, adopted a middle course; and laying hold of John, he bound him, and put him in prison.

But though John was thus quietly put out of the way, and there was no fear that his officious rebukes would reach the ears of Herod and his guilty partner, yet this did not satisfy Herodias: John lived, and she was consequently uneasy. She could not forgive the Baptist; his rebuke rankled deeply in her mind; her soul was filled with fear and the bitterness of pride and wrath, and she thirsted for revenge. She must have John silenced effectually; let him be murdered; no voice can come from the tomb to disturb them in their pleasures. She therefore watched for an opportunity to lead Herod to consent to the death of John.

A banquet was prepared on the birthday of the king; the daughter of Herodias danced before him; Herod was seized with a sudden admiration; he made a rash oath that whatsoever she should ask, even unto the half of the kingdom, he would give it to her. The opportunity had arrived; and the damsel having consulted her mother as to the gift she should demand, was at once told to say, "Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger." "And the king was exceeding sorry."

He had not expected this fearful close to his revelry; "yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her." Because of some scrupulous point of honour, some cowardly feeling of shame, "he commanded it to be given her." "And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded John in the prison, and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel; and the damsel gave it to her mother." Such was the close of this fearful history.

Now there are some truths connected with Herod's excuse for his murder of John, which it may be for the interest of the reader to consider. Just let your thoughts dwell on these words, "The king was exceeding sorry; nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her."

He was sorry, "exceeding sorry;" but his sorrow did not prevent his crime. He turned his imaginary scruple about breaking his oath, this false feeling of shame about withdrawing his word in the presence of his courtiers, into a justification of his wickedness. What a proof we have here of the scriptural saying, "The

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heart is deceitful above all things!" This man, who is so scrupulous about his oath, had contracted an incestuous marriage, and was about to add murder to adultery. Better break the rash and unlawful vow, than heap sin upon sin by keeping it. Better at once tear asunder the meshes of sin, than permit himself to be entangled in the net which has been woven for his soul. But Herod feared man more than God, and so, though he was "exceeding sorry," he sacrificed John, and pleaded a point of honour as an excuse for sinning.

Does the reader see any features in this portrait which answer to his own? Are you among the number of those who, when they sin, would fain persuade themselves that they are compelled to do it?

You may make a profession of religion, you may think you would like to be wholly the servant of God; but there is, perhaps, still something which prevents your being altogether a Christian. The world has its demands, and you cannot forego them; or friends have their claims, and you cannot deny them. You cannot break away from old companions, or you cannot give up the society in which you have so long mingled, or you cannot shake off old habits; and so, though you are "exceeding sorry," you can go on sinning. And thus, perhaps, you look upon yourself as a person to be pitied rather than blamed, because circumstances will not let you do as you would, and because you persuade yourself that there is a necessity for continuing in an evil course. You have your times of remorse and regret, when you long to lead a better life; but the world, the flesh, and the devil are too strong, and so you remain as far from heaven as ever.

Oh, beware of the deceitfulness of sin! You cannot say to what lengths you may go. Conscience often grieved may at last get dull and hard, and you may be given over by God to a "reprobate mind, to do (without feeling) those things which are not convenient." Ah, do you think that God is altogether such a one as yourself, or as your fellow men? Do you fancy that you can continue alternately to offend and to ask His forgiveness—to do what He forbids, and then by a few tears or a few hollow sighs, persuade Him to grant the pardon you desire? "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." He is not beguiled by such feelings of regret as those you experience, when you are "exceeding sorry," and yet continue in sin. Yours is not the "godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of;" and which consists in a just sense of sin, and in a holy fear of God. But yours is that "sorrow of the world which worketh death," because there is in it no self-condemnation, no confession, but rather the impression that circumstances justify your conduct, and that God, instead of punishing, should actually connive at your offence.

What, then, is your duty, if you would indeed be saved, not only from the guilt, but likewise from the power of sin? Is this question put in sincerity, from an honest conscience? Then the answer is ready. Surrender yourself wholly to the Lord. Let "Herodias," the besetting sin, be abandoned; and, with Herodias, let every excuse and apology for sin be put away. Do not follow what is expedient, but do what is right. With the

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sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, cut the knot of all evil entanglements, and come over entirely to the Lord's side. Let no "but yet" stand between you and the Saviour. He is willing to forgive the past, if you receive pardon on the simple and gracious terms of the gospel.

Hear His own call to thee, O sinner!—"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Pray to God for that true repentance for sin, which will not only cause you to feel "exceeding sorry," but which will constrain you to pay a cheerful obedience to the command, "Go, and sin no more." You cannot attain to this obedience in your own strength, for *that* is perfect weakness; but you can in the strength of the Lord. "His grace is sufficient for you." He is "able to make all grace abound toward you."

There is everything in Jesus to supply the deepest need of your souls: "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." There are many sins on your conscience, but His blood "cleanseth you from all sin." "He offered Himself without spot to God," for the very purpose of "purging your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." The word of the Lord is, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him."

Come, then, to Christ, that He may wash out the transgressions of the past, and that He may renew you unto holiness for the future. Lay your sins by faith on the head of the Surety, and then you will have a holy trust and confidence in God as a father; for "There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Believing in Jesus, there is no room for fear; His righteousness will present you perfect before God, "unrebukable and unreprovable in His sight." Sanctified by the Spirit, you will have no pleasure in sin; you will hate it; you will seek to "cleanse yourself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit;" you will endeavour to "perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord." Yes, you will ever strive to "run the way of *all* the commandments," and you will never more make that hollow excuse for sinning, "EXCEEDING SORRY—YET."

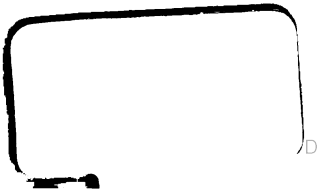
Jesus, the hindrance show,
Which I have feared to see:
And let me now consent to know
What keeps me back from Thee.

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